

Ark Volume 22

Act 1: Descent of the Goddess

“Waaahhhh!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The thick castle walls were nestled between high cliffs. An intense battle between monsters and humans was taking place in front of the castle wall. Monsters armed with thick leather, fangs and claws collided with warriors armed with armour, shields and swords. Meanwhile, the spells of the magicians and monsters clashed and shook the area filled with death. Chaos.....the tens of thousands fighting turned it into a chaotic battle. And the chaos also affected the headquarters.

“The Heavenly Knights unit on the right side has been isolated among the enemies!”

“The spear troops who have been supporting the Heavenly Knights have been caught by Tallons!”

“The 3rd defense battalion in the centre is being destroyed by a giant!”

“The 7th division commander is requesting wide area magic support!”

A bloody messenger reported the military situation in a breathless voice.

“Move the cavalry to the right to support the Heavenly Knights unit. Have the 11th reserve battalion move to the centre and built a defense line while rescuing the survivors. And we can’t grant the 7th division’s request at the moment. Presently the support magicians can’t be moved to that area. Have them retreat to the strategy area and join with the magician unit on the left side of the hill.”

“But the 7th division will find it difficult to retreat without the support of the magicians.”

“There are no units that are free right now!”

“.....I'll communicate the orders.”

The messenger sighed painfully and jumped back onto the battlefield. Haverstein also sighed as he looked at the disappearing messenger.

“The monsters are stubbornly resisting.”

Haverstein looked at the castle walls with the black fog floating around it. Right now Haverstein was leading the Schudenberg expedition while they were trying to invade Pabiun Fortress. Pabiun Fortress was blocking the only passage into the Sinius Principality from Schudenberg kingdom. Over the last 100 years, Pabiun Fortress never fell despite the repeated attacks from Schudenberg. It was the same even with Pabiun Fortress occupied by monsters. Despite the Schudenberg army having 30,000 troops, they hadn't been able to capture the fortress despite trying for 10 days. There were two significant reasons.

One reason already mentioned was that Pabiun Fortress was an impregnable fortress. And the second reason was the Black Obelisk Forest. Thanks to the Black Obelisk Forest, the monsters that died were resurrected after a scheduled amount of time passed. If the dead kept on being revived, it was the natural that the battle would come to a standstill. But a few days ago, the situation had worsened with the news that the Bristania expedition had already crossed the border and was marching towards Silrinad. If the Bristania expedition reached Silrinad first then they would become in charge. If control was taken away by the Bristania expedition then Haverstein would be divested of the commander position. Despite that, Haverstein couldn't attack aggressively. If the Black Obelisk Forest still existed then the expedition would only receive more damage by being reckless. Then a few hours ago Haverstein received some good news.

“Hik hik hik! O-operation.....success.....”

Racard had flown from the canyon and passed on the message while panting. After crossing through Smuggler's Pass, Ark had succeeded in the <Blow up the Black Obelisk Forest> operation. The most troublesome

problem was gone! Haverstein's voice immediately resounded through the camp.

"The problem that is blocking us is gone! The Black Obelisk Forest has been destroyed and the demonic monsters are in a state of confusion so this is the perfect chance to capture the Fortress!"

Haverstein rallied all the troops and headed to attack Pabiun Fortress. Just like Haverstein expected, the demonic monsters were rushing back and forth as the obelisk was blown up. They would be unable to respond properly to the expedition's attacks. Therefore the military expedition penetrated the canyon and reached Pabiun Fortress within a few hours.

"If we continue pressing like this then it will be possible to capture the fortress by the end of the day!"

For the first time in days, the expedition army was convinced of their victory and they cheered. Of course, the biggest challenge of the castle's walls still remained. But organization rather than numbers were needed in a siege. While the demons were more systematic than ordinary monsters, it wasn't to the extent that they could endure a siege. It was the reason why the demons left the fortress and battled in the canyon. On the other hand, the expedition members were familiar with sieges and had large weapons able to break the walls. Now that the black obelisks were destroyed, the number of demons couldn't be reinforced anymore. They were able to take advantage of the demons' confusion to penetrate the canyon and reach the fortress. At this point, the expedition army were already half way to victory. Yet they still had to cross a mountain in order to win.

"Commander-nim, they've appeared!"

A desperate voice was suddenly heard from the supporter's camp. Haverstein turned around and saw that huge monsters had appeared in front of Pabiun's gates. They were giant monsters 20 metres big with chains circling their body and holding a large pillar. Tension filled Haverstein's eyes.

“.....Gripper!”

That’s right. The Grippers! The mountain standing in the way of the expedition’s victory was the Grippers. No, to be exact it was the Gripper’s ‘Earth Blast’ skill! When the Gripper used Earth Blast, all monsters within 2 kilometres had their abilities increased by 50% while the soldiers had theirs reduced by 50%. For example, if the expedition and monsters were both level 100 then the 50% increase meant the monsters’ abilities were equivalent to level 150. On the other hand, the expedition forces received a 50% penalty and were reduced to level 50. Therefore there was a 3 times difference in abilities. That difference was huge in a war. If it was used then the military situation would be instantly reversed. The expedition had failed to capture Pabiun Fortress many times because of the Gripper’s Earth Blast.

‘But this time the situation is different!’

“Armoured troops, all at the front gates with the large weapons!”

After receiving Haverstein’s order, the catapults and Fire Barrage Crossbows aimed towards the gates. Haverstein had discovered a weakness in the Gripper’s Earth Blast skill during the days spent trying to capture the fortress. It was that they needed a certain amount of space in order to use the skill. If there were any structures within the area of the skill then it would offset the impact through the earth and it wouldn’t work properly. The space required was approximately 100 metres. In other words, the Grippers needed to be 100 metres away from the fortress before they could use the skill.

So the Grippers had to go through the gates. This was the reason why Haverstein hurried towards Pabiun Fortress after receiving Racard’s message. If the Grippers went outside and scattered then it would be impossible to handle all of them. However, the situation changed if they were still exiting the fortress. They could intercept every Gripper when they exited the gates. So although the sacrifices weren’t small, Haverstein rushed to reach the fortress. He arranged the large weapons and made sure they were aimed at the gates. Their one objective was to intercept the Gripper.

“.....Launch!”

Tu tu tu tung, tu tu tu tung!

Hundreds of artillery flew across the battlefield at the Grippers. The Gripper who was exiting could barely take a few steps before kneeling down and becoming tattered.

-Kuaaaaaah!

As soon as one collapsed, another Gripper exited through the gates. But the large weapons were already aimed at the gates!

“.....Launch!”

Tu tu tu tung, tu tu tu tung!

Large weapons fired again and clouds of dust appeared. When that repeated a few times, the bodies of dozens of Grippers were piled up like a mountain. Then another Gripper once again appeared in front of the gates.

“Lord, Lord, it’s the last one!”

Racard flew towards Haverstein’s head and exclaimed. Ark hadn’t unsummoned Racard.....Ark had also moved to Shangri-La so they couldn’t communicate wirelessly.....so he helped Haverstein using satellite mode. Anyway, if they dealt with one more then they didn’t need to worry about Earth Blast! After receiving Racard’s report, the last Gripper was hit by the crossbows and catapults.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

“That’s it! Now all the obstacles in front of us are gone!”

After watching the explosion which occurred in front of the gates, Haverstein was convinced of their victory. The Earth Blast played a huge role so the monsters would become even more confused! But that sense of victory soon turned to shock.

“U-unbelievable.....!”

-Grrrrrrrr.

The growl of the Gripper could be heard. The Gripper hadn't died despite being hit by all those artillery.

“H-How on earth.....?”

Haverstein murmured with an incredulous voice.

Tuduk, tuduk, syu syu syu.....

Something suddenly emerged from the body of the Gripper. After seeing what it was, Haverstein could now understand the reason behind the Gripper's incredible defense. It was a demonic monster which emerged from the body of the Gripper. The tattered demon had arrows piercing it. That's right. Before the siege weapons had attacked, the Gripper had used the surrounding demonic monsters as armour. Therefore the Gripper managed to survive the hundreds of artillery shots.

“No way! Such a thing.....”

“It takes 1 minute to charge the large weapons.”

“We can't just wait until then. Magic and arrows is also fine. Just stop it!”

The expedition troops fired magic and arrows after receiving Haverstein's order. However, the response of the demons also couldn't be underestimated. Thanks to the demonic monsters creeping up the Gripper's body as armour, it was able to travel 100 metres. And the Gripper finally plunged the stone pillar into the ground.

-Kuaaaah!

The Gripper then roughly pulled out its heart. The Gripper's body exploded like a bomb and a huge shock wave spread in all directions. Then a hopeless information window floated in front of the expedition members.

-The Gripper has invoked the 'Earth Blast!'

The Gripper has sacrificed its life and used the huge stone pillar to spread the impact of the curse through the earth. Sacrificing its life will give a more powerful impact. Those who receive the impact will be deprived of their power and won't be able to oppose any more evil spirits. Those within 2 kilometres who receive the impact will take 24 hours to recover their power. Meanwhile, the evil curse will strengthen the demonic influence within 2 kilometres and the monsters will become stronger.

<NPCs and users will have their abilities decreased by 50%. Monsters with the demonic influence will have their abilities increased by 50%.

Duration: 24 hours>

"In the end.....!"

Haverstein's face turned dark from the impact. Earth Blast was still used despite their efforts. Of course, the black obelisks were blown up so the Grippers couldn't be revived anymore. The last Gripper had self-destructed to use Earth Blast. They could retire outside the 2 kilometres range of Earth Blast and wait until the skill ended before attacking again. However Haverstein couldn't afford to do that now. The Bristania expedition had been advancing towards Silrinad for 3~4 days already. Even if the Schudenberg expedition managed to capture Pabiun Fortress, they still required 2~3 days to march towards Silrinad. In other words, it would be impossible for the Schudenberg expedition to catch up to the Bristania one if they couldn't capture Pabiun Fortress within one day. They couldn't afford to waste 24 hours. No, it wasn't even easy to retreat. Haverstein had advanced to the front of the fortress because he was 100% confident that he could interrupt the Earth Blast. He hadn't considered retreating at all so he developed a strategy where the troops just advanced. If he gave an order to retreat then it was possible the formations would collapse and the situation would worsen.

-*Kuraka, kuraka, nohun! Arkra mojaham!*

While Haverstein was hesitating, the demonic monsters started to flow out from the fortress. The first group that emerged were the Heavy Walkers that were 10 metres big. The Heavy Walker wore thick armour like the infantry and wielded a hammer.

“Heok! Stop those guys!”

The warriors at the front hurriedly raised their shields while getting into their defense formations. The Heavy Walker had a huge body and possessed tremendous attack power. But if the warriors were in a defensive formation then it was possible to thwart it to some degree. That was now impossible thanks to the effect of Earth Blast.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

The warriors hit by the Heavy Walkers flew dozens of metres away. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of the warriors.

-The attack has exceeded your defense and the ‘Guard Break’ effect is applied.

<When Guard Break is in effect, a penalty is applied to your defense and you will receive 1.5 times the damage. When getting into a defense position, it will automatically be released and ‘stun’ will occur for 3 seconds>

The Guard Break effect which was applied when the attack exceeded the defense! Guard Break was the most troublesome problem under the effect of Earth Blast. Usually armour warriors never had their defense lower than the enemy’s damage, no matter how strong the enemy was. The combination of armour, helmet, gloves, shoes etc. all contributed to a high defense. The warriors who took a defense position could also use their shields to full effect....if the shield was successfully used to defend then its defense would be applied. So the shield boasted the best defensive power of all equipment! When 100% of the shield’s defense was applied, the warrior would become like a tanker. However, the 3 times stat difference had a huge effect. The Heavy Walker was also a huge demon with tremendous attack power. After Earth Blast was

used, the Heavy Walker's attack immediately exceeded the warriors' defense. So the expedition's defense line collapsed in vain.

-Bakuram, bakuram, puraibata, bakuram!

Following behind the Heavy Walkers were the Tallons, monsters with 5 heads and 8 arms, etc.....all the demonic monsters within the fortress shrieked and exited. With the defense formation collapsed, the monsters rampaged among the expedition's troops. Requests for help started to come from all over the place.

".....Retreat."

In the end, Haverstein sighed and gave the command to retreat. Then the unit commanders started shouted.

"What do you mean? Retreat?"

"If we retreat then we won't be able to catch up with the Bristania expedition!"

"The Bristania expedition will take control!"

"Besides.....have you forgotten? If Bristania arrives first then Commander-nim....."

"It doesn't matter if I am reassigned."

Haverstein replied through clenched teeth.

"If we retreat then we won't be able to catch up with the Bristania expedition. But if we continue to fight and are wiped out then what is the point of arriving at Silrinad first?"

"That is true however....."

"There is no time for arguing. As you can see, the military situation has completely reversed. If we continue to hold on then the sacrifices will only become larger. The strategy has already failed. We need to save as much people as possible for any future plans."

The unit commanders looked upset but they no longer raised any objections. They didn't know of any method to change the situation. Then like Haverstein said, it would be best to retreat and avoid any more damages. The Black Obelisk Forest was already destroyed and the Grippers all killed so the next commander should have no problem capturing Pabiun Fortress. Of course the Bristania expedition would've already triumphantly entered Silrinad.

"I understand. Then Commander-nim should also retreat."

".....I will stay here until the end."

"Huh?"

"If we retreat here then leadership will be handed to Bristania and a new commander will replace me. I'm the knight who caused such problems to the kingdom. Then my job now isn't to preserve my life but save as many soldiers of the Schudenberg Kingdom as possible."

"Commander-nim!"

The unit commanders were lost in admiration after hearing Haverstein's words. However Racard's voice shattered the mood.

"Stupid people, this isn't the time to be idle!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Racard cried out as a roaring sound occurred to the right side. Haverstein and the unit commanders turned around and stiffened. The Heavy Walkers and Tallons had broken through the lines of defense and was heading towards headquarters. They had aimed to capture the fortress in this battle so the headquarters was placed too far in front. After the expedition army was pushed, the monsters immediately headed towards the headquarters.

"Heok, stop those guys!"

"Request support from the nearby unit!"

The leaders grasped the situation too late and their orders were one step behind. Before the commands could be obeyed, the defense line had been annihilated by the Heavy Walkers. Then the Tallons poured into the camp and caused chaos among the soldiers.

“Ugh, royal guards! Protect the Commander!”

The unit commanders shouted as the troops blocked the monsters. Meanwhile the royal guards had surrounded Haverstein. But before they could sneak out of headquarters, they were caught by the Heavy Walkers and attacked. The Heavy Walker’s attacks caused Guard Break and the barrier created by the royal guards was pulled down. When the royal guards flew everywhere, Haverstein instantly swung his sword.

“You demons!”

Haverstein’s long sword accurately split a Tallon’s neck. Just like a user, the NPC’s abilities varied depending on the level and skills. As the commander of the expedition, Haverstein was a high ranking NPC. He might be young but he had elite stats for a NPC. Even under the effect of Earth Blast, Haverstein’s attack dealt a critical blow. Haverstein didn’t miss the opportunity and continued defeating dozens of Tallons with the help of the royal guards. But killing dozens of Tallons didn’t have the situation. After a short time, the royal guards were defeated and the injured Haverstein was surrounded by monsters. It was a desperate crisis! But Haverstein’s face didn’t show any signs of fear.

“I have no intention of leaving the commander’s position alive. I have to kill even more before I die!”

Haverstein made a desperate resolution and enthusiastically rushed towards the demonic monsters. It was the true spirit of a warrior! Unfortunately, his sword couldn’t keep up with his determination. After 10 minutes of fierce fighting.....

Kakakakak, chaeng!

His sword collided with a Heavy Walker’s hammer and broke.

“Dammit, Dark Dash!”

Racard didn't know what to do so he closed his eyes and used Dark Dash on the Heavy Walker. Racard knew what an important person Haverstein was to Ark. Wouldn't he be beaten if he allowed Haverstein to be killed?

“Ack!”

However Racard was the one thrown back after hitting the Heavy Walker. If the users' attacks that were affected by Earth Blast didn't work properly then naturally Racard's attacks wouldn't work either. When Haverstein stumbled and fell, the Tallons swarmed like ants.

“Ugh! Is it going to end here?”

Haverstein murmured in a hopeless voice.

“Ooohhh! T-they're here!”

Racard who was touching the bump on his head suddenly looked out and shouted. At that moment, a voice rang out through the battlefield.

“Demonic Distortion!”

Then an amazing scene occurred in front of Haverstein. Something appeared in the sky over the battlefield. They were swords, spears, armour and various other equipment. The equipment tangled together and formed a pentagon. After floating in the air for a bit, the equipment then exploded. And the surrounding space started to mysteriously warp. There was a sucking sensation from the warped space and the monsters surrounding Haverstein were sucked in.

“T-this is.....?”

Haverstein's crisis had been averted. Then 200 different people appeared in the warped space. Haverstein was shock after seeing their faces.

“Y-you guys?”

“Please retreat to the back. Take this, Dark Strike!”

One man moved like a flash of light. At the same time, the Heavy Walker approaching behind Haverstein received heavy damage and stumbled. The man dived at the Heavy Walker and continuously wielded his sword. Dozens of attacks hit the Heavy Walker’s body like a meteor shower. The Heavy Walker couldn’t counterattack properly and collapsed.

“.....Fortunately I’m not too late.”

The man smiled and turned around after handling the Heavy Walker. Haverstein gaped with surprise before exclaiming.

“Ark!”

That’s right. The one holding a sword with a dark aura was Ark.

“You’ve returned. By the way, that vortex just now? How did you.....?”

“I’ll explain later.”

Ark said to Haverstein before looking around.

“The situation isn’t as good as I expected.”

“.....As you can see. You risked your life to blow up the Black Obelisk Forest but we couldn’t stop the Earth Blast so it turned out like this. At present the Bristania expedition will reach Silrinad and even if we retreat, there is no guarantee we can do it safely.”

“Retreat? Is that a joke?”

Ark shook his head at the ridiculously of those words. Then he raised a palm in front of Haverstein and said.

“5 minutes. Give me 5 minutes. I assure you. You’ll be able to capture Pabiun Fortress after exactly 5 minutes.”

"5 minutes? What does that mean? The effect of Earth Blast still hasn't disappeared....."

"I don't have time to explain in detail. Believe in me and delay the retreat by 5 minutes."

Ark interrupted Haverstein and spoke bluntly. Haverstein looked at Ark before shouting to the leaders nearby.

"Quickly send a signal to all troops on the battlefield. Cancel the orders for a retreat. Maintain the current position. Concentrate on defense and wait for the next command!"

"You won't regret your choice."

Ark checked the signal flare in the sky with a smile and turned his body.

"You know the situation right? There is no time to be playing around."

The people who appeared with Ark simultaneously pulled out their weapons. Around 70 special forces had survived the <Blow up the Black Obelisk Forest> operation. But they weren't the only people who appeared from the vortex.

"Grrrrr."

"You can see the demonic monsters."

"We can't let them win!"

130 people with fangs also appeared among the group and glared at the demons. With white fur and black strops, they were the White Tiger clan that protected Shangri-La. Ark looked around and directed the White Tiger clan and special forces.

"The special forces will help the main army to restore the defense line. Each White Tiger member will move with a special forces member."

Before arriving at the battlefield, the White Tigers had already been paired off. There was a reason Ark organized it this way. Based on their

experience in the canyon, the White Tiger clan were the strongest! The NPCs were stronger than the level 350 special forces.

‘But they don’t have experience in a group battle.’

That was the only disadvantage with the White Tigers. They were born with the power of the tiger and were without a doubt the strongest warriors. But they were born and lived in Shangri-La so they didn’t have battle experience. That was the reason a few White Tigers died at the canyon. They just ran in blindly and became the focus of the concentrated attacks.

‘I have to teach them how to fight in a group if I want to take advantage of their power.’

This was the conclusion Ark came to. But it took time to teach them tricks of a group battle. They were beast NPCs so there was no guarantee how long it would take to teach them to fight like humans. So he came up with the system of pairing the White Tigers with the soldiers. The special forces were the elite users from the expedition force so they had a good grasp on how to move in a war. When paired with their tactics, the abilities of the White Tigers could be utilized to full effect. Ark was able to confirm that effect straight away.

-Kuaaaaaah!

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

When the Heavy Walkers used Guard Break and the defense of the special forces decreased and they became stunned. There was no way to stop the onslaught of the Heavy Walkers!

“Keuaaaaang!”

Then 1 of the White Tiger members ran up to the Heavy Walker. The White Tiger jumped up and dug their fangs into the neck of the Heavy Walker. The Heavy Walker shrieked and shook its body but the fangs didn’t move. After knocking down the Heavy Walker, the special forces members who weren’t stunned anymore helped the White Tiger. The

White Tiger removed his fangs and licked his lips that were wet with blood before seeking another prey. But the soldier shook his head and said.

“It is dangerous to go out from now on. We should have the defense camp for now.”

The White Tiger stepped back after the soldier’s words. The White Tigers helped the lacking offensive power of the soldiers while the soldiers helped the White Tigers with their tactics.

‘The urgent fire has been put out.’

Ark looked around with satisfaction. Before Ark’s troops arrived, the headquarters had been completely surrounded by the demonic monsters. But Ark had exchanged 200 monsters with Demonic Distortion. Therefore the number of demons around headquarters was reduced while Ark’s group appeared there. The defense formation of headquarters which had fallen into confusion was restored with the appearance of the White Tigers and the special forces.

‘Now, shall I get started?’

Ark turned around and looked at the White Tigers. Around 70 White Tigers had joined the battle with the 70 special forces so there were 60 still remaining. They were gathered to protect the 10 prophets in the centre. That’s right. Some prophets had accompanied Ark’s group. There was a reason the prophets came to the battlefield despite having no combat power. It was because of the big box a prophet was carrying. The old wooden box was the Ark of Creation kept in Shangri-La for hundreds of years!

“Lariette-nim!”

Ark shouted and Lariette nodded. The prophets lowered the Ark of Creation to the ground. The prophets began to circle the ark while kneeling and humming.

“Tasha, Naburan heirado narado.....”

“Sinarudo maguran harena boradu baram.....”

When the prophets started chanting spells, light immediately began to flow around the ark. But strangely the light was a mixture of black and white light which seemed to be fighting. But the tainted light disappeared when Lariette approached and touch the Ark of Creation, causing a bright light to shoot up into the dark sky.

-Kurak, baguram, baguram!

The demonic monsters started shrieking. Until then, the thousands of demonic monsters had been recklessly attacking the expedition. In fact, the monsters hadn't intended to attack the headquarters and were just randomly attacking. But when the light shot up from the sky to pierce the darkness, the movements of the demons immediately changed. They all shrieked and started to head towards the pillar of light.

‘I thought it would become like this.’

Ark had expected this situation and arranged some troops around the Ark of Creation.

“Now switch to a defense formation! All troops concentrate on protecting this area!”

The special forces and White Tiger clan formed a circle around the ark and got into a defense formation. Then Ark looked at Shambala and laughed.

“What are you doing? Come! It is time to work Shambala.”

“What? You want me to fight? Am I your pet? Even if you shed tears begging me to help you.....”

“Stop joking around. I used the ‘1 time Shambala use’ coupon. You should be a little more compliant.”

“What do you mean? I’ve already.....”

"I didn't want you to help with the <Blow up the Black Obelisk Forest> operation."

Ark laughed and muttered. That's right. When Ark used the '1 time Shambala use' coupon, he hadn't clearly stated what the condition was. He just spoke ambiguously that he wanted Shambala's help with this war. Shambala thought he meant helping with the operation to blow up the black obelisks.

!"Didn't I say that I wanted help with this war?"

"What? Then you meant?"

"Yes, the '1 time Shambala use' coupon will last until this war ends. And you've already agreed."

"This bastard! Only saying that now....."

Shambala glared at Ark's shameless answer. But Ark just murmured cunningly.

"You and I are friends. Isabel will be disappointed if you don't keep promises with your friends."

".....You cheeky bastard!"

Shambala gave up and took out his daggers before entering the battlefield. Despite his anger, he didn't want Isabel to know him as someone who broke promises.

'Kekeke, what an innocent fellow. He is like my pet now.'

Ark looked at the back of Shambala's head and laughed. But Shambala was just a bonus. Ark's summons were a separate matter

"Racard!"

"Yes Master!"

“Use satellite surveillance mode and keep repeating the movements of the monsters!”

“Understood, roger!”

Racard flew like a bullet into the sky at Ark’s command. He switched to satellite mode and occasionally reported updates about the battlefield.

“200 monsters consisting of Tallons ad Heavy Walkers are approaching from the right side!”

“Alright! Shambala, move to the right side defense line. Summon Demon Purital, Clad Armour!”

Ark rushed to the target area and shouted.

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Purital was summoned to the area behind Ark. As soon as Purital appeared, his bones were taken apart and reformed around Ark. The ribs split to cover his upper body while the skull covered his head like a helmet. The leg and arm bones twisted strangely and stuck to Ark’s gloves and shoes.

-You have used Clad Armour.

* Damage will increase by 17~22.

* Defense will increase by 98.

* Health will increase by 1,866.

<If the 1,866 health is consumed then Clad Armour will automatically dismantle>

“Flash!”

The transformed Ark brandished his sword and shouted. Ark swept through the group of Tallons like a lightning bolt. The heads of the Tallons that Ark pierced spouted blood like a fountain. Even with Earth

Blast increasing their abilities by 50%, the health of the Tallons was drained.

“.....This is no joke.”

Ark looked at his sword that had a black aura around it. It was the ‘Shining Darkness’ that he received as a quest reward for <Witness the Legend>. The attack was 55~65! This was 15 more than the Promised Sword’s base damage. In addition, it dealt an extra 10% against demonic monsters. Purital also increased his attack by 17~22. In the end, Shining Darkness’ attack increased by 37~42. This number was similar to Ark’s original damage. In other words, his damage had increase by more than two times. But that was just the base damage. His damage against demons increased thanks to Demonic Response. Currently, the level of ‘Demonic Response’ was IV. This meant a 40% damage bonus when dealing with demonic monsters.

‘I’m also impervious to the Demonic sphere of influence!’

Ark smiled as he used Dark Blade and turned the Tallons into rags. That’s right. Ark had the dark attribute so the Demonic sphere of influence didn’t affect him. It was the same even with the effect of Earth Blast amplifying the sphere of influence. In fact, the black fog caused darkness so Ark received the 50% dark attribute bonus even in the daytime. Well, that was offset by the demons also having their stats increased by 50%. But besides the dark attribute bonus, Ark also had the Demonic Response IV which increased his attack by 40%. Along with the 10% bonus of Shining Darkness, that was a 50% bonus against the demons. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that Dark Soul was a profession specialized towards fighting against demonic monsters.

“Dark Strike!”

Pepepepeng, pepepepeng!

The Tallons went flying whenever Ark swung their swords. It was ineffective even if the Tallons tried to use their shields or weapons. This

time Ark was the one who used Guard Break against the demonic monsters. Moreover, Shambala was also fighting near Ark.

“Shambala, take the right side!”

“Sheesh, you don’t have to say it again. Torrential Sword!”

Shambala spun his body like a spinning top and dozens of daggers appeared in the area. The Heavy Walker who was running towards Ark became like a hedgehog and stumbled. Assassins possessed the dark attribute so Shambala also wasn’t affected by the demonic sphere of influence. He actually had a dark attribute bonus similar to Ark. It wasn’t that different from dealing with general monsters of a similar level. They already weren’t rivals for Shambala anymore.

“Sun, Gae, Yeol, Seom!”

Shambala ran lightly across the battlefield with his dagger. Shambala would never admit it and he argued every time but he liked fighting together with Ark. If Ark attacked to the right then Shambala would automatically rotate to the left and attack. If Shambala ever rushed an opponent then Ark would go behind him and prevent any attacks from the rear. It was a perfect combination! The demons collapsed one-sidedly when the two people moved in unison. Thanks to Earth Blast, an ordinary user couldn’t even last against one demon. Yet the two of them were one-sidedly slaughtering dozens of monsters.

“T-that is ridiculous.....!”

“Two people are stronger than a unit?”

“I heard rumours that they are Dark Wolf and Blue Sword.....”

“Dark Wolf and Blue Sword!”

“They interrupted a huge war and helped Seutandal rise! If we have Dark Wolf and Blue Sword then it is possible to win this battle! They will create a similar legend to Seutandal!”

“Waaaaahhhh!”

Thanks to Ark and Shambala’s actions, the expedition army regained their morale and pushed back against the demonic monsters while shouting. However, motivation wasn’t enough to change the tide of the war. In addition, the monsters were crowding around the Ark of Creation! While other troops were able to escape the crisis, the headquarters was receiving the concentrated attacks from thousands of monsters. No matter how much Ark and Shambala raised the morale of the soldiers, it was impossible for them to block all the demons.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

After a few minutes. In the end, part of the defensive line around headquarters collapsed. Ark and Shambala were on the opposite side of that place.

“Damn, if the defense line collapses then headquarters will become dangerous! Special forces and the White Tiger clan will reinforce the part that collapsed. “Shambala, there’s no time. Push them to one place so we can quickly take care of those guys.”

“I know! Torrential Sword!”

Shambala might’ve complained but he still pushed the demonic monsters to one place. They were finally gathered in a large group. Ark’s eyes brightened and he shouted.

“White Tiger’s Roar!”

Keuaaaaang!

A huge tiger appeared above Ark’s head and roared. A tremendous shock wave spread and caused the demonic monsters to stumble. White Tiger’s Roar was a special option attached to the ‘White Tiger’s Cloak’ that was flapping from Ark’s back.

-White Tiger’s Cloak (Rare)

Armour type: Mantle

Defense: 35 Durability: 60/60

Weight: 35 User restriction: Level 400

A cloak made from the leather of the White Tiger clan that lives in the snow covered mountains to the north of the continent. The White Tiger clan was known for their valour and received the duty of protecting the prophet clan living in Shangri-La from Hero Maban. The valour of the White Tiger clan is lodged in this cloak and can be used in different types of situations.

<Option: Immune to effects that decrease morale. Courage +30%, Agility +30>

<Special Option (White Tiger's Roar): The tiger is known as one of the reigning beasts. Therefore the white tiger possesses the dignity required to subdue lesser animals. The White Tiger's Roar causes all enemies within a 100 metre area to tremble with fear.

Cool down time: 1 hour. Mana consumption: 200>

This cloak was the compensation for the <Shangri-La> quest. The White Tiger clan elders gave it to him after safely bringing the Nuran residents to Shangri-La. That was another reason Ark headed to Shangri-La after exiting the canyon. The <Shangri-La> quest was an additional quest that he could solve in one go. And the difficulty of that quest was A+. Therefore the quest rewards would also be considerable. It was a rare cloak that raised courage by 30% and agility by 30! There was also the White Tiger's Roar which caused fear among the enemies. However, there was another meaning being the rare 'White Tiger's Cloak.' As soon as Ark received the cloak from the White Tiger elder, a new information window appeared.

-The set items' effect has been applied.

You have equipped a new item in the set.

-Set

A special set of items that craftsmen created for an ancient hero. Naturally, the effects will become more powerful when the number of equipped set items increases. If you obtain all the items in a set then the effects will be beyond compare.

* Currently equipped set items: <Animal King>

『Raccoon's Pith』 『Cat Paws』 『Guardian Armour of the Merpeople』 『Wolf's Feet』 『White Tiger's Cloak』

You have equipped 5 items in the <Animal King> set and an additional effect will be applied.

<Wild Ability: Strength +20 (+15), Agility +20 (+15), Stamina +20 (+15), Defense +40 (+30)>

<The Animal King set has been completed and the bonus skill [Wild Strength] can be used>

That's right. It was the set completion! Ark had met several beast clans and received a set equipment as a reward. So he had obtained 4 of the Animal King set. There was only one remaining until the set was complete. But the set was finally completed after obtaining the White Tiger's Cloak. Once the set was completed, the bonus given far surpassed the previous ones. When he added up the combined stats that increased, strength, stamina and agility increase by 35 while defense increased by 70! The additional bonus of the set effect was the same as gaining 16~17 levels.

'It's good that I haven't changed the equipment in the meantime!'

In fact, Ark had obtained several equipment better than his current ones but the set effect was valuable so he had kept it. But as his level grew, the equipment had been reaching his limit. Now that the set was

completed and he checked the added bonus, all his worries were settled. However, the set completion bonus wasn't just additional stats.

"Wild Strength!"

Ark cried out after causing fear with the White Tiger's Roar. At the same time, Ark's equipment started shining. The armour, helmet, gloves, shoes.....

The forms of the beasts Ark obtained the equipment from floated in front of the equipment. From the armour was a mermaid swimming in the ocean, the helmet had a raccoon digging a tunnel, the gloves had the Meow jumping around the trees while they shoes had the wolves howling on the plains. Finally from the fluttering cloak emerged a white tiger roaring from the top of a snow-covered mountain.

A message window floated in front of Ark the moment the white tiger roaring from the mountain appeared.

-The Wild Strength skill from the Animal King set has been activated.

These equipment are connected with several beast clans who live in New World. Each equipment contains a property of the beast clan in it. Although the species are different, they live in the natural ecosystems and have an inseparable symbiotic relationship with each other. When equipped with these equipment, the mutual power will react and you will be given a strong power. When all the equipment is worn, the wearer's potential would explode and Wild Strength will be unleashed.

<Wild Strength: Unlike the wild beasts, humans are only able to display 60% of their strength. In moments of crisis, humans can display 100% of their power! When Wild Strength is used, the power sleeping inside the user will awaken by 100% and the effectiveness of all skills will increase by 50% for 10 minutes. However, the mana consumption for all skills will increase by 100%.

Cool down time: 12 hours>

* Passive skills are excluded

It was the option Wild Strength that he obtained from collecting all of the Animal King set. It increased the effectiveness of all skills by 50% for 10 minutes. This meant all offensive skills would gain an additional 50% damage. Well, he consumed double the mana instead but he could show tremendous power for a short period of time.

“Radun, a demonic sealed sword!”

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

“Blade Tempest!”

Radun spat out a sword and quickly made it explode. The cursed sword shattered and caused a storm. After receiving various bonuses, Ark’s combat power had increased. The cursed sword also had a lot of damage. Thanks to Wild Strength will increased all skills by 50%, the power of Blade Tempest surpassed imagination. It wasn’t just the damage but also the number of fragments that changed. Usually the sword broke into hundreds of pieces when Blade Tempest was triggered. But the power of the skill had increased by 50% thanks to Wild Strength. Therefore the sword broke into 1,000 pieces.

When the sword fragments collided with a body, sparks flew and the whole space was swallowed up. The demons inside the storm had their health sucked out at a tremendous rate. When the storm passed, the unsteady demonic monsters were in various tattered states. The demons couldn’t even heal. The demons were in various pieces with limbs cut off that they couldn’t even recognize themselves, let alone check their health.

“Now. Finish them quickly and concentrate on the defense on the other side.”

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

The discouraged soldiers ran over with surprised looks. The demons were already in a state of panic from Blade Tempest and couldn't withstand the assault from the soldiers. After Ark gave the order, he rushed over with Shambala to the collapsed defense line. But despite Ark and Shambala's struggles, the situation was still worsening. Thanks to the light from the Ark of Creation, 4~5 times the number of demons were already crowding headquarters.

"All units should concentrate on headquarters and construct defense lines!"

Haverstein called the expedition forces to headquarters but it was already overrun by demonic monsters. The units had arrived too late so they could only attack the monsters on the outskirts. The monsters ignored the expedition members and just attacked headquarters even more violently. The numbers of demons kept on increasing no matter how many Ark and Shambala killed.

Flash, kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

An intense flash of light suddenly appeared at headquarters.

"That's it!"

Ark turned his back on the demonic monsters. At the same time, a tremendous view unfolded in front of him.

".....Descend to this earth, Great Mother of Creation!"

The prophets surrounding the Ark of Creation simultaneously raised their heads and chanted a spell. The Ark of Creation opened and a pure white light shot into the sky. It spun like a whirlwind and was sucked into Lariette's body. When the light entwined with Lariette's body, her body became thousands of times larger. The Lariette who rose against the background of the black sky was different. With black hair like obsidian, crystal clear eyes and skin as white as a snowfield, she was a surprisingly beautiful woman.....no, it was the form of a goddess.

"T-that is.....?"

When she appeared, everybody forgot themselves and looked up captivated. Even the demonic monsters stared.

Kuoooooh-!

Shining silvery wings with thousands of eyes on it unfolded from the goddess' back. The huge wings reached several kilometres.....The wings flapped and swept through the black fog. And light started to cover the space where the wings flapped. At first it was a small and soft light until it spread and exploded like a big bang.

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa, ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The light that touched the black fog swallowed it up.

"Huck! E-explosion? Avoid it!"

When the explosion occurred, the expedition forces screamed and rushed all over the place. However the entire area was exploding. There was no place to run away. Eventually the expedition members were caught by the blast. But the expedition members were all confused in the next moment. There was no impact from being involved in the explosion. No, instead they actually started recovering instead of being damaged.

"The heavy spirit pressing down on my body has disappeared."

"But there's more. This aura gushing from my chest....."

"I don't know why but my courage is rising quickly!"

The expedition members murmured as they were enveloped with light.

-Keuahahak!

But the demonic monsters caught in the explosion were different. Their flesh burnt from the explosion and the health dropped. Suddenly a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-The Ark of creation has been triggered!

The power of the Creator who made this world in the beginning is contained inside the Ark of Creation. Because both light and dark were a part of the Creator, this power can be used for light or darkness. If used by a Holy Knight then it can be a blessing or a curse if used by a Ruin Knight.

When a Saint Knight calls upon the inner light (Sanctuary: Saint).

When a Ruin Knight calls upon the darkness (Sanctuary: Devil).

-Saint Knight's special ability 'Sanctuary: Saint' has been triggered.

<All effects related to the 'Demonic Sphere of Influence' within 10 kilometres will be completely destroyed.

The area blessed with the effect from the Ark of Creation can't be affected by the 'Demonic Sphere of Influence' or the 'Black Obelisk' for 1 year.

In addition, all demonic monsters within the light will receive 1~2,000 damage. However all allies will regain 1~1,000 health, have all abnormal states removed and morale increased by 50%>

'This is the effect of Ark of Creation.'

Ark's eyes widened after he checked the information window. In fact, Ark hadn't known the effect of the Ark of Creation. The prophet clan protecting the Ark of Creation was the same as well. All he knew was that the Ark of Creation had the power to drive back the darkness. He was sure that the Ark of Creation would change the military situation but was uncertain about the rest. Nevertheless, he talked confidently to Haverstein because he couldn't let them retreat. If the expedition retreated then Haverstein would lose his position. If that happened then Ark would become bankrupt.

'It will be the same as dying! If there is even the slightest chance then I have to take it!'

That was Ark's thought. However, the effect of the Ark of Creation was unthinkable. All the black fog within a 10 kilometres distance was destroyed. It meant the effect of the Demonic Sphere of Influence also disappeared. All the bonuses given to the demonic monsters had faded! The demons lost their 50% bonus with the supporters recovered the 50% stats. In addition, the demons caught in the explosion were damaged while the allies had their health recovered and morale increased by 50%. The situation had reversed.

"What on earth.....?"

Haverstein muttered as he looked up at the blue sky. Ark replied with a wicked grin.

"Now we can fight back."

Haverstein looked around after hearing Ark's words. The expedition members who had been looking battered now looked recovered. On the other hand, the demons had lost their bonuses and looked fearful. It was obvious to everybody. The side of victory had tipped.....

"Do you see? We have the will of God. Now we will take that will of God and show the power of justice. Defeat the demons!"

"Waaahhhh!"

The expedition members shouted as they attacked. The demons had seen the pillar of light and swarmed the headquarters. And the expedition members were gathered around the outskirts because of Haverstein's order. The result was obvious. With all the bonuses and penalties gone, the demons were no match for the military expedition. And their morale rose even more when the enemy weakly died. On the other hand, the demonic monsters had completely lost their fighting spirit. When the expedition members cried out and pressed forward, the demons quickly collapsed.

And Pabiun Fortress that they struggled with for more than 10 days was captured in a few hours.

Act 2: War to Secure the Sacred Blood

“There is no doubt that we managed to capture Pabiun Fortress thanks to you and the special forces.”

Pabiun Fortress had finally been captured and arrangements after the battle were being cleared up. Haverstein embraced Ark and said those words. Then a message window floated in front of Ark.

-The sub quest <Blow up the Black Obelisk Forest> has been completed.

The Schudenberg expedition has been stuck at Pabiun Fortress for a long time and had been unable to enter the Sinius Principality. You and the special forces have risked your lives to accomplish this mission and managed to capture Pabiun Fortress as well as passage into the Sinius Principality.

<Compensation: Achievement +3000>

+ Commander Additional Compensation: Achievement +1000

“Ohhh 3000 achievement points!”

The eyes of the special forces members sparkled as the quest was completed. In the battlefield it was common to gain only 5~15 achievements yet they had earned a few hundred times that from one quest. But this was the laws of the world. The infantry killing dozens of enemies couldn’t change the landscape of the war. However, the special forces penetrated the enemy’s camp and changed the landscape of the war with one explosion. It was natural for the special forces who risked their lives to gain more achievements. Once again, if they hadn’t blown up the Black Obelisk Forest and obtained the Ark of Creation then Pabiun Fortress wouldn’t have been able to be captured.

Of course, finding the Ark of Creation would’ve impossible if he hadn’t begun the <Blow up the Black Obelisk Forest> operation. Even the users who fought and died received between 2,500~3,000 achievement points. So the special forces had collected achievements a lot more

quickly. As the commander of the special forces, Ark gained an additional 1,000 achievement. He also played an active role as the supplier so he had scraped together 6,000 achievements.

‘In fact, I had to give up a certain degree.....’

His saliva dried up as he confirmed the achievements. According to how much achievements he accumulated, the compensation for the <Schudenberg Expedition’s Crusade> would change. However, the compensation for this wasn’t just in the game. Ha Myung-woo from Global Exos had formally declared on TV that there was a huge reward for this war against the demons. The total prize pool was worth 10 billion won!

If they received first place in either the Schudenberg or Bristania expedition then the reward received was 300 million won. But there were at least 30,000 users participating in each expedition. In other words, the competitive rate was 30,000 to 1. It was like winning the lottery so Ark hadn’t expected to get it from the beginning. But that changed once the war actually began.

‘Hopefully.....’

He had started to think like that. Besides, this event also had a higher cash prize than receiving the no.1 rank in achievements. It was finding something hidden in New World. Surprisingly the reward prize was 1 billion won. And that was Ark’s target.

‘Ordinary users will have no idea what ‘that’ thing was. I am the same but I have a lot more information than they do. That is enough for me to aim for it.’

That’s right. It was the hidden secret behind the event! Ark had already heard about it from Global Exos. It was the ‘black code’ items that Ho Myung-hwan talked about. After his encounter with Andel and Alan, Ark had more information about other the black code items than other users. So Ark had decided to give up on earning achievements when the event started.

‘But the situation has changed. The prizes for the 1st ranked achievement and finding the black code item is separate. Doesn’t it mean that I could possibly receive both prizes? That is 300 million won for the achievements and 1 billion won for finding the target item. In other words, it is possible to gain 1.3 billion won from this event!’

1.3 billion won! It was money that a mere citizen like Ark had difficulty imagining. It was money that was difficult to imagine in reality. The thought made his heart jump like crazy. But Ark shook off the thought with a shake of his head. In the present situation, it was possible for Ark to aim for both prizes. But it was just an aim. The possibility of it being achieved was very low.

.....The Demonic War was just beginning. No one knew what would happen in the future. There was no guarantee about what could happen so wasn’t it better for him to focus on things that would actually earn money?

‘It doesn’t change the fact that it is still like winning the lottery.’

Ark escaped from the delusion of 1.3 billion won and started putting things in order. He had settled the <Blow up the Black Obelisk Forest>, the <Witness the Legend> and the <Shangri-La> quests. He had gained 4,000 achievements, the legendary sword Shining Darkness and the final piece of his set equipment, the White Tiger’s Cloak. It was severing three things with one stroke! But the biggest harvest was.....

“You said you would explain later. Who are those people in hoods and the beasts? No. What is the box that they brought which gave Lariette miraculous powers?”

Haverstein asked at that moment with curious eyes. It was the miraculous power which overturned the situation where the expedition was threatened! As the commander of the military expedition, Haverstein was naturally curious. Ark had expected this question and explained straightforwardly.

“It is called the Ark of Creation and it has the power of the Creator sealed inside it. The chest belonged to the 7 heroes during the Dark Century and the entrusted it to the prophet clan to protect. The demons actually flocked here in order to steal the power within the Ark of Creation.”

“In order to steal the power within the Ark of Creation?”

“That is the reason but.....”

Ark hesitated and recalled the description that a prophet gave him in Shangri-La. The power of ‘Sanctuary’ activated by the Ark of Creation clearly proved deadly to the demonic monsters. However, they didn’t want to steal the ark just because of the threat.

“The Creator made darkness as well as light. It is both good and evil. Then if a Saint Knight used the ark then it would spread a blessing but if a Ruin Knight used it then it would spread a curse. If a Saint Knight obtains the ark then it would display great power against the darkness. But if a Ruin Knight obtains it then conversely it will show great strength against the light.”

The power of the Ark of Creation had already been verified.

“If the demons get their hands on the Ark of Creation.....”

Haverstein murmured in a trembling voice at the fearful thought. Then he asked again after a short time.

“Then the only one who can use the Ark of Creation is Lariette?”

“Yes, on our side only Lariette can use it.”

Ark looked at Lariette and answered. In fact, Lariette had changed a lot from when she was in Shangri-La. Her body still had a light glow around it. The reason was associated with Lariette’s profession. When Ark arrived at Shangri-La, he discovered that Lariette had received the quest to look for the Ark of Creation from a bishop. It was a profession change quest for the Innocence Knight. And Lariette changed to a Saint

Knight after obtaining the Ark of Creation. The glow emitted from Lariette's body was the passive skill 'Permanent Brilliance' which increased defense and damage against demonic monsters by 40%. The descendants of the 7 heroes gained abilities specialized for dealing with demonic monsters. It was revealed at Shangri-La that the 7 heroes expected the Dark Lord to be resurrected and arranged to convey those powers to foreigners.

'It really is dazzling in many ways.'

A sigh naturally flowed out when he saw the shining Lariette. Anyway, the only ones who could use the Ark of Creation's power was a Saint Knight or a Ruin Knight. Although Ark still didn't know that Alan was a Ruin Knight. And despite the Ark of Creation being brought into the expedition's hand, it was like Lariette was the owner.

.....This was the part Ark felt strongly about. In fact, Ark had been full of dreams when he heard about the Ark of Creation. Once again, the reason Ark executed this mission was to ensure that the Schudenberg expedition reached Silrinad before the Bristania expedition. If the Bristania expedition arrived first then Haverstein would be replaced and Ark would lose all his profits. But that worry was gone thanks to the Ark of Creation. The Bristania expedition was expected to arrive in Silrinad in 3~4 days but the Schudenberg expedition could get there in 2~3 days after capturing the fortress. Of course, the Sinus Principality had black obelisks stuck everywhere and demonic monsters were swarming. There was no guarantee about what they would encounter after passing through Pabiun Fortress.

But it was the same for the Bristania expedition so there was no reason for the Schudenberg expedition to arrive later. Although the Bristania expedition had 80,000 troops, the Schudenberg expedition had something to fill up the gap left by insufficient numbers. It was the Ark of Creation! No, in fact it didn't matter who arrived in Silrinad first now. The final goal of the expeditions was to purge the demonic monsters from the continent. In order to do that, the influence of the black obelisks had to be perfectly cleansed. If they didn't completely

destroy the black obelisks then wouldn't it just be resurrected later? Despite all the magicians and priests in each kingdom working on a way to purify the Demonic Sphere of Influence, the perfect way to do that had fallen into the hands of the Schudenberg expedition.

That's right. The Ark of Creation was the key to resolving the Demonic War. A sigh naturally flowed from Ark's mouth at the thought.

'If I could handle it.....'

He could negotiate a significant amount of money from both kingdoms in order to allow the expeditions to use it. But was that all? The Ark of Creation was able to turn the tide of the war so he could gain a lot of achievements. If that happened then he could get his hands on the 1.3 billion won prize money!

'But Lariette-nim is the only one that can use the Ark of Creation.....'

It would become difficult to engage in business involving the Ark of Creation. But who was Ark? He was an unscrupulous merchant who didn't let go of even a single blade of grass! It was a lucrative treasure so Ark wasn't going to give up the chance to earn money. And Ark found a way to make money from it in an unexpected direction. It was the prophet clan who provided Ark with a hint.

'Huhuhu, I can't miss this opportunity.'

Ark was smiling at his thoughts when he heard Haverstein's voice again.

"This is a big deal. With the Ark of Creation, we can fully cleanse the black fog spreading from the black obelisks on the continent.

This is the method to save the continent."

Haverstein continuously praised Ark's achievements in a cheerful voice. But Ark's next words poured cold water on Haverstein's giddy mood.

"I'm sorry but the Ark of Creation can't be used at the moment.

".....Can't be used? What do you mean?"

“Actually, a significant amount of ‘Sacred Blood’ is required in order to use the Ark of Creation.

“Sacred Blood?”

“This.”

Ark took out a few small, red stones from his bag.

-Sacred Blood (Special)

A mysterious stone rarely found in deep dungeons. This stone is called Sacred Blood and has something to do with an ancient myth. According to the ancient myth, the Creator used its own body to make the world.

The pieces of skin became the earth while the bones became various minerals. And the oceans and lakes were made with blood and tears. But when separating the body, some blood mixed with the pieces of skin and became buried underground. These pieces hardened after several thousand years passed. Because it contains the hardened blood of the Creator, the Sacred Blood is said to be the closest thing to the Creator’s body which exists in this age.

But this is not confirmed as it reacts like a common stone to magic and solvents.

“These stones are necessary to use the Ark of Creation?”

Haverstein asked after examining the Sacred Blood.

“Yes, there is a legend that the Sacred Blood is a hardened drop of the Creator’s Blood.”

“I have heard of that legend before.”

The person who answered was Nadin, the person in charge of spreading supplies. He dealt with various supplies so was well-versed in different legends.

"But wasn't that a rumour some merchant used to try and sell the Sacred Blood?"

"It's not just a rumour."

"Then the Sacred Blood really contains the blood of the Creator?"

"That is unknown.....but the Ark of Creation contains the Creator's power. And the Sacred Blood is its source of power. Therefore it is highly likely that the legend of the Sacred Blood isn't entirely unfounded."

"The legend of the Sacred Blood isn't the important thing."

Haverstein said after looking at Ark.

"The important thing is to collect the Sacred Blood so we can use the Ark of Creation."

"Yes, but the problem is that it is fairly difficult to obtain the Sacred Blood."

Ark mock sighed and replied. The Ark of Creation consumed 100 Sacred Blood with every use! When considering the future, there was no telling how many Sacred Blood was needed. But like Ark said, it wasn't that easy to secure the Sacred Blood. Despite the legend attached to the information window, it still seemed like an ordinary stone. It couldn't be used as a magic equipment or be used in jewellery since it was a plain stone. Therefore the NPC stores weren't willing to buy it. In other words, the only way to purchase the Sacred Blood was through users. That's why it was difficult for Ark to obtain the Sacred Blood.

"We have no choice but to use the Ark of Creation to purify the black fog in the Sinius Principality. So it is most important to obtain a reliable supply of Sacred Blood. But it can only be bought from foreigners so it is difficult to obtain a steady supply."

"Do you have a solution?"

“There is a way.....”

Ark hesitated before carefully replying.

“The problem is money.”

“Money?”

“Yes, the Sacred Blood is a stone rarely found. The foreigners haven’t discovered its uses yet but they have a lot of curiosity so they won’t sell it cheaply. And in order to obtain a steady supply, men would have to be sent to various places to buy it. So considerable labour costs are required.”

“I know what you mean.”

Haverstein nodded as if he understood. And he answered in a firm voice.

“But the Ark of Creation is the key to settling the Demonic War. We have to secure the Sacred Blood no matter how much it costs so please put all your efforts into it.”

‘It’s a success!’

Ark nodded with a smile of satisfaction at Haverstein’s words. This was the method Ark used to gain money from the Ark of Creation. In fact, it was quite difficult for Ark to secure the Sacred Blood. But even if it was a rare item, there were millions of users in New World. There would always be some for him to buy. Still the reason Ark exaggerated it was to raise the price of the Sacred Blood. Currently Ark was supplying the expedition with munitions at 70% of the market price. But that was possible because Ark was participating in the production of the supplies. But if he bought it from the foreigners and sold it at 70% then he would suffer a loss.

So Ark had included a provision when making the contract for the exclusive supplies. If the commander and quartermaster acknowledged an exception for an item then he could get 10% of the purchase fee. In other words, if an exception was authorized then Ark would obtain a

profit of 10%. Of course, the Sacred Blood was the exception item. No matter how much he bought in the end, Ark could make a profit of 10%. However, the reason Ark raised a fuss was to obtain more profit. In other words, he could state that he required additional labour fees in order to obtain a steady supply of the Sacred Blood. And the Schudenberg expedition had no choice but to buy the Sacred Blood in order to use the Ark of Creation.

‘Hopefully I can gain 20% of the purchase price because of the handling fee and still obtain a lot of Sacred Blood. If the price inflates then I can receive several thousand gold in profit.’

Ark thought like that and made an even bigger fuss.

“Well, money isn’t the only problem to obtaining the Sacred Blood.....

But I know the importance of the Ark of Creation so I will mobilize my guild and try my best to secure it. But the amount of Sacred Blood required by the expedition will be huge. Even if I rally my personnel, the 10% handling charge in the contract won’t be sufficient. In order to make certain ends meet, I need at least 20% of the fee.....”

Just as Ark was about to bargain in earnest.

“Wait a minute.”

Nadin who was looking at Ark carefully suddenly interrupted.

“Is it really that hard for Lord Ark to obtain the Sacred Blood?”

“What do you mean?”

“I know that the Sacred Blood is a rare stone but I’m not sure that obtaining it will be difficult enough to guarantee raising the fee in the contract. No, in fact I’ve been doubting your abilities as the exclusive supplier for the expedition army.”

‘This bastard, what is he suddenly making a fuss about?’

Ark felt annoyance rise at Nadin's words. But Nadin just ignored Ark's reaction and continued talking.

"Commander-nim knows fully the important of the Ark of Creation to the expedition. Clearly money isn't an issue if it is to obtain the Sacred Blood. The supply of Sacred Blood is important. I have no objections to this part."

"Then what's the problem?"

"The problem is the quality of the supplier."

"The quality of the supplier?"

"Your duty is to supply items for soldiers fighting in the war to support them. Being able to supply the necessary items no matter how hard it is to obtain is a necessary quality of the supplier. But Lord Ark just admitted that it would be difficult for him to obtain a reliable supply of the Sacred Blood. Then isn't he missing the qualities of a supplier?"

"No, that....."

Ark hurriedly rushed to talk. However Nadine struck first.

"Sacred Blood is the most important item for the expedition so having the supplier be unable to obtain it is a huge problem. If he has no confidence then can we really leave such an important item to Lord Ark?"

"Hmmm....."

Haverstein sighed with a careful expression. Nadin's words did make sense. Haverstein's expedition going forward would centre around the Ark of Creation. It was the obvious strategy. But he couldn't ignore the risk of what would happen if the important Sacred Blood supply was disrupted.

"But Lord Ark has done wonderfully as the expedition's supplier. Shouldn't you just believe in him?"

“The Sacred Blood isn’t some simple supplies. It is a key item which will determine success or failure. I think that leaving to problem to a more accomplished merchant would be better.”

“You think that a merchant will be better?”

“Yes, the merchant’s guild in Selebrid.”

‘That bastard.....’

Ark started to realize Nadin’s reason for causing an uproar. Nadin was an aristocrat who belonged to Duke Sarkin’s faction. Duke Sarking had been sure his candidate would win and had already organized with the merchant’s guild in Selebrid to provide supplies. However, that was all wasted when Haverstein unexpectedly became commander. That’s why Nadin had disapproved of Ark from the beginning. And he immediately pounced on this situation with the Sacred Blood to cause problems for Ark. He even tried to transfer the matter of the Sacred Blood over to the merchant’s guild in Selebrid.

“It isn’t necessary to say but the merchant’s guild has networks all over the continent. And the merchant’s guild in Selebrid can use its large influence. If they were in charge then they would be a reliable supplier of the Sacred Blood.”

Nadin spoke steadily. Then Haverstein made a perplexed expression.

“But Lord Ark is the one who brought us the Ark of Creation.”

“Of course. The success of the <Blow up the Black Obelisk Forest> is a worthy achievement and I praise him for that. But.....”

Nadine sighed and gazed at Ark.

“His achievements as a warrior are different from his work as a supplier. The Sacred Blood is urgently needed so shouldn’t it be handed over to a more competent supplier?”

"I didn't say that I couldn't supply the Sacred Blood! I said it would be difficult."

Nadin lifted a corner of his mouth and muttered.

"But the merchant's guild in Selebrid wouldn't have those problems.

.....That is all I'm saying."

Haverstein also couldn't respond to Nadin's words. Like Nadin said, the success or failure of the expedition depended on the Sacred Blood. As the Schudenberg commander, he had to put aside personal emotions and decide without any bias. However, it was difficult to obediently accept Nadin's words.

"It is not yet confirmed whether the merchant's guild in Selebrid can provide a steady supply of Sacred Blood or whether Lord Ark can't supply it. Shouldn't both sides have a chance to try?"

Nadin's eyes then flashed. And he proposed like he had been waiting for this chance.

"Then how about a price competition?"

"Competition? What competition are you talking about?"

"The key is a reliable source of Sacred Blood. That is the easiest way to test their abilities."

Nadine smiled and continued.

"It will take the expedition approximately 3 days to arrive in Silrinad. Ark and the merchant's guild have until then to obtain the Sacred Blood. How about the aim is for both of them to supply 1,000 Sacred Blood by the time we reach Silrinad? That would be a better way to choose the right supplier."

"What.....!"

Ark made a ridiculous expression. Nadin just shrugged cynically.

“What’s wrong? Are those conditions disadvantageous to you? You said you have a lot of personnel but you don’t have any confidence that you can beat the merchant’s guild?”

“Lord Nadin wants a competition between suppliers when we are in the middle of a war?”

“It is because it is a war. Commander-nim.”

Nadin answered in a sharp voice.

“The fate of thousands of soldiers and the continent is at stake so important positions need to be entrusted to competent people. To be honest, I’ve already doubted Lord Ark’s qualifications as the supplier and those doubts only worsened after hearing his words about the Sacred Blood. It is only because of Lord Ark’s achievements that I am giving him a chance.”

Nadin had caught Ark and Haverstein’s tails with his clever answer. There was no room to refute those words. In the end, the stubborn Haverstein was forced to wave a white flag.

“.....Like Sir Nadin said, the supply of Sacred Blood is vitally important. So you will compete over who can obtain the required Sacred Blood. But Sir Ark has been the supplier without any problems so far so that shouldn’t be involved in this matter.”

Haverstein was able to give Ark that much. However, Haverstein had firmly made up his mind.

“The issue is not as simple as you think. When compared to all the munitions, the Sacred Blood is very few. If the merchant’s guild is able to supply the Sacred Blood and doesn’t receive any profit then they will suffer a loss. Then why would the merchant’s guild in Selebrid participate in this competition? It is unprecedented for an expedition to trade with two businesses. It is obvious. The business that wins in this competition should become the supply group.....”

“But.....”

“Okay. I accept.”

Haverstein said reluctantly. Ark who had been listening from the side made an angry expression. But it was impossible for him to decline in this atmosphere. It would be better for him to accept the competition and quickly think of ways to win. When Ark accepted the competition, the conversation proceeded rapidly.

“But what if both parties bring 1,000 Sacred Blood?”

“Then they’ll compete with the price.”

“Price?”

“Yes, the Sacred Blood is important so it isn’t possible to question the money spent on it. But I am in charge of the expedition’s funds. It is natural for the side with a lower purchase price to be the winner. And the expedition will pay the winner of the competition an average of the two Sacred Blood bids.”

“What does that mean?”

Haverstein was at a loss so Nadin explained. “Isn’t it possible to report that the item was bought cheaply in order to win the competition when it was actually bought at an expensive price? So the expedition will pay the winner the average price of the two corporation’s purchase price.”

In other words, let’s say it was 55 gold. Then Ark would receive a loss of 45 gold for every Sacred Blood he supplied. However, it wasn’t possible to buy the Sacred Blood at an excessively high price. If the purchase price was high then it would be easier to buy the Sacred Blood, but if the merchant’s guild also supplied 1,000 and they had a lower price than they would win. This competition was a way to catch 2 rabbits by deciding the supplier and reducing the monetary burden of the Sacred Blood purchases on the expedition!

“Okay, then I will take your advice regarding the competition.”

The talk about the war to secure the Sacred Blood ended with Haverstein's words. Ark made a complicated expression as he left the tent and Shambala laughed at him.

"You made a mistake."

"Do you want your house to catch on fire?"

"Isn't this because you were too greedy? It is your own fault."

"You really.....!"

Ark was about to retort sharply when he shook his head.

'Damn, I was too greedy.....'

Like Shambala said, Ark's greed was coming back to haunt him. Ark could've just quietly accepted the 10% fee for the Sacred Blood and there wouldn't be any problems. In the end, he became too greedy and was stuck in a competition with the merchant's guild of Selebrid.

'I have a headache.'

He had three days before the expedition arrived at Silrinad to provide the Sacred Blood but that wasn't enough time. Even if he managed to buy the right amounts, it still needed to be transported to Silrinad. If he removed the transport time which was approximately 12 hours then he had around one day to buy 1,000 Sacred Blood from users.

'But I've already know where I can buy the required amounts of Sacred Blood.'

Ark had learnt from Shangri-La that Sacred Blood was needed. So Ark had already determined how to make a profit from the Sacred Blood before leaving Shangri-La. That was why Ark accepted the competition.

'The problem is how to win the competition.'

Ark was irritable because of Nadin's condition to pay the average purchase price of the two competitors. If Ark bought 1,000 Sacred Blood

at a high price then he would lose the competition. But if he lowered the price too much to win then it would be hard to obtain a profit. No, he might actually receive a loss instead. If that happened then he would rather give up the competition. But now he had to win the competition, even if it meant suffering a loss.

“I should’ve just taken the 10% fee.....”

Ark murmured as he bit his lip. Then a question popped into Ark’s head.

‘Wait? Wasn’t I perfectly trapped?’

Now that he thought about it, it was like Nadin knew about the situation in advance. He had grabbed Ark and Haverstein’s tails before bringing out the competition. And he also presented the condition of the purchase price. It was too complicated and clever to be devised suddenly.

‘But there’s even more. Nadin seemed to have already gotten the agreement from the merchant’s guild beforehand. How could Nadin just suddenly decide on a competition?’

It was impossible. Despite the merchant’s guild having the advantage, it wasn’t 100% that they would win. And if it was a low price then they would have to suffer a loss. That wasn’t something that Nadin could decide for them. Then Nadine would have to check whether the merchant’s guild wanted to compete. But he didn’t say a single word about that. So he must’ve already had the merchant’s guild’s agreement from the beginning.

‘Then Nadin has already contacted the merchant’s guild about this. But how? Only Shambala and Lariette knew that the Sacred Blood was needed to power the Ark of Creation.’

There was no way Nadin could know about it beforehand. However, there was one person Ark had not considered. Somebody other than Ark and Lariette knew about the Sacred Blood. It wasn’t just Shambala. It was Sid! Ark had contacted Sid in order to purchase the Sacred Blood for him. But Sid had leaked the information to Nadine.

“How dare that bastard.....?”

“Bah, did you think I would stay under you forever?”

“You bastard!”

Ark was about to approach him.

“What does that mean? This merchant is my guest.”

“Guest?”

“Yes, if you want to see him then you’ll have to explain and ask permission from me first.”

Nadin declared sharply before taking Sid and entering the tent. Then Shambala whistled and muttered.

“How is it? Isn’t this quite fascinating?”

“Shut up!”

Ark shouted angrily. He thought Sid was becoming more impertinent these days but he never imagined that Sid would secretly communicate with Nadin. But the problem wasn’t Sid’s betrayal. He could find another hobbit.

‘Sid is the one I asked to secure the Sacred Blood forme.’

That was the biggest problem. Ark had known about the Sacred Blood since Shangri-La. So he had contacted Sid and ordered him to buy the Sacred Blood. Sid had considerable connections in various places so he could secure the Sacred Blood. It was why Ark accepted the competition. But Sid had attached himself to Nadin. The Sacred Blood that Sid purchased also went to Nadin. It was like Sid had transferred the exclusive trading rights to Nadin. In return for his betrayal of Ark, Nadin had probably promised him a share of the Sacred Blood profit.

‘How dare he betray me?’

A harsh sound emerged from Ark's mouth. If he kept on grinding his teeth like that then it would wear away. Now that Sid had aligned with Nadin, Ark no longer had a solution to his problem.

He was facing a large crisis.

Act 3: Double Agent

"Silrinad!"

The soldiers marching in the lead cheered. After Haverstein captured Pabiun Fortress with 30,000 troops, another 15,000 had joined the main army. That was because the earth around Pabiun Canyon had been cleansed with Sanctuary. While 45,000 troops had died during the 10 days capturing Pabiun Fortress, most of the users revived and only 5,000 NPCs actually died. It was finally possible to march towards Silrinad.

"Doesn't it resemble Giran in Schudenberg Kingdom?"

Shambala asked as he looked around. Wide plains stretched out in all directions while various roads headed to the city like spider webs. Like Shambala said, the terrain surrounding Silrinad was similar to that of Giran.

"Are you a fool? That's why it was selected as the stopping place of the expedition forces."

Ark scowled at Shambala and muttered. That's right. The reason why Silrinad was the stopping place was because like Giran, it was the biggest commercial city in the Sinus Principality. As the commercial city, it had a lot of roads stretching in all directions. If the expeditions stayed at Silrinad then they could move anywhere in the Sinus Principality in a short time. But it wasn't the only reason the city was selected. When the Schudenberg and Bristania joined together, there would be 130,000 troops! It was natural for that many soldiers to gather at a large city. They needed meals and lodging for 130,000 people. Moreover, if

they blew their nose then 130,000 tissue paper was necessary. A massive amounts of supplies were needed. Especially when starting the Demonic War. The problem was carrying a massive amount of supplies over land was limited. And that problem would worsen the further they marched. Therefore the expedition armies needed to secure a supply route and both kingdoms agreed to stop at Silrinad.

“You came all the way here and you didn’t know?”

“What? Why are you in such a bad mood?”

“Do you need to ask? Why do you think I’m like this?”

Ark retorted with an angry expression. Just as he was about to say something else, the rough sound of a horse hoof could be heard. It was the advance party that had entered Silrinad first to scout and returned. Haverstein hurriedly asked the advance party leader.

“What is Silrinad’s current situation?”

“It isn’t different from the other areas. The surrounding villages are ruins while the residents were either killed or took refuge somewhere.”

“Any news about the Bristania expedition?”

“We encountered the Bristania advance scouting party on route. They were quite surprised to see us. It seems like they will reach Silrinad tonight.”

The leader replied with an elated smile. Then the leader blew a sigh of relief.

“Oh, now I can feel at ease.”

Despite rushing from Pabiun Fortress, they didn’t know the situation with the Bristania expedition and had been inwardly worried. Of course, the Schudenberg expedition had obtained the Ark of Creation so they didn’t need to worry about having the control taken away. But reaching

the place first was still a good thing. Haverstein also looked relieved and asked a question.

“The demons?”

“They seem to know that the expedition forces are gathering here. The demonic monsters spread throughout this region are gathering. I can’t grasp the correct number yet but there are around 70,000 demons gathered.”

“Then they should have more than 80,000 monsters if they keep on gathering.”

Haverstein thought for a moment before ordering.

“If more of them start gathering then it will become dangerous. Move to the western region and construct a camp there. As soon as the Bristania expedition arrives, we will use the Ark of Creation to purify the black fog and start the invasion!”

“Ohhhhhh!”

The soldiers cheered at the command. And they resumed the march and murmured with expectant faces.

“We can see the goddess again tomorrow?”

“Huhuhu, I can’t wait to see the faces of those in the Bristania expedition.”

“Anyone who isn’t stunned after seeing that appearance isn’t human.”

“If they see the goddess then those Bristania guys will have to hand over the leadership without a sound.”

The goddess they were thinking about was Lariette. After using Sanctuary to capture the Pabiun Fortress, the military expedition really viewed Lariette as a goddess. The effect of Sanctuary was so overwhelming that it was enough to make users and NPCs kneel down. Lariette was praised as a goddess so it was difficult for Ark to

meet her anymore. Anyway, that was the reason Haverstein wanted to wait for the Bristania expedition before beginning the battle. Even if the Schudenberg expedition arrived first, it was unknown if Bristania would concede the initiative. They could use the excuse that the Bristania border was further away to try and take the initiative. But if they saw Sanctuary being used then the situation would change. Sanctuary's effects were overwhelming.

'Dammit!'

Unlike the soldiers, Ark's face was permanently in a frown. Haverstein's words about the Ark of Creation had reminded him of a huge problem. If you want to use the Ark of Creation then Sacred Blood was necessary. In other words, before the Bristania expedition joined..... It meant the competition for the Sacred Blood would need to be resolved by tonight.

'Is it possible to rewind time?'

Sid's betrayal was a fatal blow to Ark. Sid's betrayal meant the Sacred Blood he had would be given to Nadin. Fortunately, he was able to direct JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members to secure the Sacred Blood. But the time given to Ark was three days. In this situation, there was no telling how long the required Sacred Blood would take to get here.

'There's no guarantee that I will arrive even if the items arrive in time.'

In fact, he had received no contact from JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members even after reaching Silrinad. So Ark had been hoping that some problems would occur and the Schudenberg expedition would fall behind schedule. But that didn't happen. After the expedition passed through Pabiun Fortress, they hadn't really encountered demonic monsters. That's why Ark's features were unpleasant.

"Damn, nothing is going my way!"

Ark scratched his head with annoyance. No matter how much Ark pouted, there was no way for him to slow down the 45,000 troops. After 2 hours, the expedition army had managed to arrive at the western region and construct their camp. The fated time he wanted to avoid had finally arrived.

“Who will go first?”

They were in the tent at the centre of the camp. The troop leaders were lined up while Haverstein asked Ark and Nadin. Ark held his tongue and avoided their eyes. The items hadn't even arrived yet so how could he report first? Nadin seemed to grasp the circumstances by looking at Ark's reaction and replied with a smug expression.

“We will go first.”

At the same time, 10 merchants entered the tent holding a large box. They were Ark's competition from the merchant's guild in Selebrid. The merchants placed the box down with a flash gesture and greeted Haverstein.

“How are you doing? I am Tito, Selebrid's branch manager. We are grateful for the commander of the Schudenberg expedition for this opportunity. We were confused by the sudden proposal, but we've done everything possible to obtain the items required. And.....”

He continued blabbering on like he was writing a long novel. Ark felt anger well up inside him as he listened to Tito's blabbering.

‘Confused by the sudden proposal? They made every effort to obtain the Sacred Blood?’

They knew about the competition from the start thanks to Sid's betrayal. And Sid, Nadin and Tito were all accomplices! Obviously Tito bought all the Sacred Blood from Sid that was supposed to belong to Ark. It was like they were toying with him. Shamelessness might be a basic skill of merchants but wasn't this guy too excessive?

“Shouldn't I see the things first before judging?”

Haverstein interrupted with an uncomfortable expression when Tito didn't seem to stop talking. Tito finished his speech and opened the box.

"..... I hope this meets your expectations."

"Ohhhhhh!"

The unit commanders exclaimed as the box was opened. The box was filled with an absurd number of Sacred Blood. For a long time, the Sacred Blood had been just like stone in the side of the road to the unit commanders. But now the Sacred Blood stones were more valuable than thousands of soldiers. Therefore the ordinary stones now seemed like shiny jewellery.

"Is that everything?"

"It is 1,000 like you ordered."

Tito replied with a proud expression.

'1,000.....'

Ark felt a heavy feeling in his chest. In fact, Ark had thought Sid wouldn't be able to obtain 1,000 of the Sacred Blood. Because of the Demonic War, martial law was enacted so users couldn't trade or hunt properly. So the connection rate to the game was low and there weren't many users in the villages. In such a situation, finding 1,000 of a rare item like the Sacred Blood wasn't an easy task. And that had been Ark's only hope. But Sid had managed to obtain it.

"Now it's your turn."

Nadin laughed as he looked at Ark. However, Ark's items still hadn't arrived. Ark chewed on his lips before letting out a long sigh and accepted defeat.

"I still....."

"Ark-nim!"

No, he was about to acknowledge defeat. Some users suddenly ran into the headquarters and shouted. Ark's head instantly shot up like a spring. Just moments before disaster, the ones who ran into the tent were members of Dark Eden. They were JusticeMan's supply troops. They breathed roughly as they put down the box.

"We have the Sacred Blood!"

"How many?"

"1, 000!"

The coalition members opened the box and replied. There was also a huge number of Sacred Blood in their box. He had only contacted JusticeMan three days before so he didn't know how they managed to obtain that many Sacred Blood. But he didn't question it too closely. The important thing was that Ark also managed to obtain 1,000 Sacred Blood! Yet Ark still couldn't be relieved.

'It is still a tie.'

Nadin started at the Sacred Blood with surprised eyes before smiling and speaking.

"I also respect Lord Ark's ability. I'm honestly amazed. But did you forget?"

If both sides manage to secure 1,000 Sacred Blood then victory is decided by the purchase price."

That's right. If didn't matter how much Sacred Blood he obtained if the price was too high. If he was defeated in the competition then he would suffer a huge loss.

"That's right. This is the detailed statement of the dealings."

Tito handed over the transaction statement to Haverstein. When a merchant bought specific goods, a detailed statement of the transaction could be issued.

“We bought each Sacred Blood for 10 gold and the total purchase amount of 10,000 gold.”

After that Ark handed over his transaction statement to Haverstein. Haverstein skimmed through it and his face stiffened. A look of joy spread over Nadin’s face. Ark had bought the Sacred Blood within a short time so Nadin was sure that he had purchased it at a high price. But Nadin’s face turned an ashen colour at Haverstein’s next words.

“Lord Ark bought each Sacred Blood at 1 gold for a total purchase price of 1,000 gold.”

“Huh? What are you saying.....?”

“Look at it yourself.”

Haverstein handed over the transaction statement to Nadin who turned to stone. Surprisingly, the words that Haverstein said were written on the transaction statement.

-Transaction Item: Sacred Blood

Price: 1 gold Total purchase price: 1,000 gold

“U-unbelievable.....!”

Nadin stuttered and shook his head.

“T-this.... It is ridiculous. The market price for Sacred Blood is currently 10 gold.

Even if you buy it cheaply, it will only be a discount of a few silver. This must be some trick!”

“Those words are serious.”

Ark frowned and declared sharply.

"I participated in the competition that Lord Nadin thought of. And I used my best efforts to get this result. Isn't it horrible to say these results are the because of a trick? Do you have any evidence?"

"E-evidence?"

Nadin winced and looked at the transaction statement in his hand again.

"T-that's right. This statement. This statement has obviously been manipulated!"

"Why would I do such a thing? I bought it for 1 gold while Selebrid bought it for 10 gold so the delivery price for the Sacred Blood would only be 5 gold and 50 silver. If I bought the Sacred Blood for 10 gold and manipulated it to say that I bought it for 1 gold then wouldn't I be receiving a loss of 4 gold and 50 silver?"

"That loss could be recuperated if you continue to supply the munitions!"

"Bah, you're really going too far. Then look at it properly. You've been a supply officer for decades so shouldn't you be able to judge if that trading statement is genuine or not?"

"Bah! Okay, then I'll appraise it properly!"

Nadin snorted and started to examine the transaction statement. It was unnecessary to say but the 'Counterfeit' skill existed in New World. But it was possible for 'forged' papers to be detected by users or NPCs with a high 'accounting' skill. As a supply officer, Nadin's Accounting skill had probably reached Master level. But sweat just dripped from Nadin's mouth after examining the trading statement for a while. Ark asked Nadine with a challenging expression.

"Is there anything strange?"

"T-this is impossible....."

"Lord Nadin, your attitude is too excessive!"

At that moment, Haverstein shouted in an angry voice.

“Lord Ark is an honourable knight with many achievements. Although this competition is necessary, your attitude towards Lord Ark is too much. You should control your emotions.”

Nadin opened his mouth silently a few times before sighing and leaving. When Nadin left, Tito also bowed and exited the tent. When the situation put in order, Haverstein looked at Ark.

“I don’t know whether to celebrate that you won the competition or not. I don’t know how you managed to get the Sacred Blood for 1 gold when Tito said the market price was 10 gold. If the merchant’s guild says so then it must be true. Doesn’t that mean you will suffer a loss of 4 gold and 50 silver now every time you deliver the Sacred Blood?”

That’s right. He won the competition but he couldn’t be pleased about it. In order to win, he had to play a trick which would cause him to lose money from now on. He had somehow protected his position as supplier but there would still be a deficit every time he delivered the Sacred Blood. But it had been like that since the competition was decided.

“That will somehow be solved with the delivery of munitions. The reason I took the position of supplier wasn’t for my personal benefit. Even if I have to suffer a loss, I want to help the Schudenberg Kingdom somehow.”

His words weren’t much different from the novel Tito was spouting before. But when Ark spoke such words in this situation, the weight of the words were different.

“As expected from Lord Ark.....!”

Haverstein and the unit leaders looked at Ark with impressed eyes. After a while, Haverstein handed him the contract for the Sacred Blood delivery with an apologetic expression.

-Schudenberg Royal Agreement

<Contractor: The Expedition Commander Viscount Haverstein= Ark, the representative of Ark's Corporation>

The Schudenberg expedition will entrust the supply of Sacred Blood to Ark's Corporation.

The delivery price for the Sacred Blood is fixed at 5 gold and 50 silver.

"Dammit!"

Nadin cursed harshly as he left the tent. There was a reason Nadin had tried to remove Ark from the supplier position. Duke Sarkin and Tito of the Selebrid branch had worked together for a long time. And Tito had given Duke Sarkin and Nadin considerable bribes in order to become the exclusive supplier of this expedition. But Haverstein had become the commander and Ark had snatched the supplier position. Therefore Nadine who had accepted the bribe was in a difficult position. Nadin had to removed Ark from the position no matter what. But the result this time was a failure! It was like he had been slapped in front of Haverstein and the unit leaders. But that was not the problem.

"Lord Nadin, how did this happen?"

Tito ran up to him as soon as he left the tent.

"Do you know how much damage we received from this? How did the result turn out like this? Didn't you say that Lord Ark would definitely fail to obtain the Sacred Blood? Yet he managed to get the Sacred Blood for a ridiculous price of 1 gold?"

"T-that is....."

"That's okay."

Tito didn't want to listen to Nadin anymore and interrupted.

“Didn’t you say that you would bear the expenses if this competition failed? Please pay the 2,000 gold in shipping costs. And also return the 5,000 gold that I gave you.”

That was the problem. Nadin had been 100% sure that he would win this competition. Sid was the reason why Nadine was so sure. Sid had been Ark’s agent to buy the Sacred Blood. Yet Sid had betrayed Ark and attached himself to Nadin before the competition started. And the Sacred Blood Ark ordered in advance had been given to Nadin. At this point, Ark’s defeat had already been finalized. Therefore Nadin never even considered the probability of him failing and had offered to pay the expenses for Tito.

“Just listen to me.”

“I don’t want to. If you don’t return the shipping expenses and the fee then I will disclose that Lord Nadin accepted bribed in exchange for the exclusive supply contract.”

“Are you really going to be like this?”

“A long talk isn’t necessary. Are you going to give me the money?”

Tito threatened him like he was a private money lender. Nadin eventually sighed and nodded.

“I understand. I will send you the 7,000 gold.”

“So we will be leaving.”

Tito snorted and left. Nadin looked like he was about to collapse from despair. He had to pay the shipping expenses and return the bribe money to Tito. That was 2,000 gold flying away for nothing.

“Dammit! Where will I get that money right now? If I delay the payment date then I don’t know how that Tito will act.....”

Nadin stood there sighing. Suddenly a small hobbit ran out from behind a tent. He looked around restlessly before running to Nadin.

“Lord Nadin, what happened? Of course it worked right?”

The hobbit whose eyes shone with anticipation was Sid. Anger snapped inside Nadin. This guy. It was because of the hobbit that Nadin lost 2,000 gold. If it wasn't for him then a situation like this wouldn't have occurred. Nadin wasn't able to stomach the anger inside him and grabbed Sid's throat.

“It worked? Did you just ask whether it worked?”

“Hik! W-why?”

“Are you asking whether it went well? When I was embarrassed in front of the Commander and the unit leaders? When a mere merchant like Tito threatened me? Or when Ark managed to secure the Sacred Blood?”

“Oh, Ark-nim managed to obtain the required amount?”

“Yes. He also bought it at 1 gold!”

“T-then the competition?”

“If you know then don't ask!”

Nadin shouted and punched Sid. Sid fell to the ground with a bloody nose. But Sid just raised his head like he didn't feel any pain and asked.

“Then what about the store permission in Selebrid that you promised me?”

That's right. This was the reason Sid had done something as perilous as betray Ark.

It was the price he received for betraying Ark! While working at the Continental Commerce Firm, Sid had obtained a lot of money. With that much money in his hands, the greedy Sid started to dream of independence. And the place Sid wanted a store was in Selebrid. However, Selebrid was the capital city of the Schudenberg Kingdom. All the rights to the stores had been swept up by other users a long time ago. Then Ark directed Sid to buy the Sacred Blood. And Sid had come

up with a brilliant idea. Nadin wanted to take the supply group position away from Ark. So he exchanged information about the Sacred Blood in return for permission to a store in Selebrid. Of course, Nadin was just the supply officer for the expedition so he didn't have such authority but he could ask Duke Sarkin for it. Although he couldn't deceive Ark forever, the thought of obtaining his own store in Selebrid made it worth it. That was Sid's plan. Sid was sure that Nadin would win and dreamed about his rosy future as the owner of a store.

"Fail? It failed? Then what about my store permission? "Huh?"

Sid sporting a bloody nose clung onto Nadin's pants.

"Do you really want to die?"

Nadin raised a sharp sword to his face with a cruel expression. But Sid had already abandoned his life after betraying Ark.

"Then just kill me already. Just somehow give me the shop permission.

You might've been defeated in the competition but didn't I do as promised?"

"This guy is still making sounds.....!"

The furious Nadin started to step on Sid.

Kung kung kung, jeok jeok jeok!

The sound of someone being pounded continued. Sid was completely kneaded like pasta dough and lost consciousness.

"Che, that unlucky hobbit bastard!"

Nadin spat and left Sid. Sid finally regained his spirit and looked up. When he couldn't see Nadin anymore, he walked away while dripping tears.

"Huk! I've been prepared to be killed by Ark in order to obtain my store permissions."

Nadin had been defeated in the competition. Yet his store permission had flown away so the only choice left was to go and die. Then someone stepped in front of Sid. Sid who was still dripping tears flinched and looked up. And his face instantly turned black.

"A-Ark-nim.....!"

Standing in front of Sid was Ark and Shambala. Ark looked at Sid's face which looked like a bloody flattened rice cake and smiled pleasantly.

"Follow me."

Sid's eyes rolled around anxiously. The place Ark had taken the captured Sid to was Ark's tent. It was obvious what would occur now. Although Ark ended up winning the competition, he had been about to lose his supplier position. Even if he received 10% of the commission, he would still suffer a loss of 4 gold and 50 silver every time he delivered the Sacred Blood. All of this was because of Sid's betrayal!

"Now, where was I? Ah, what did you get in exchange for betraying me?"

Ark muttered with narrowed eyes. Then Sid winced and once again shed tears.

"Huk, please kill me."

"Oh? You want me to kill you?"

"Huk huk huk, nothing I say will change anything. I understand. I know I was wrong. Huk huk huk, then just kill me. I've already been prepared for it."

"Okay, since you're prepared then I don't have to say anything."

Ark gave a bloody smile and approached Sid. Shambala just looked at the scene where it seemed like a tiger was about to eat its prey. And he waited for the screaming.

“Huk huk huk, huk, h..... Huhuhu, hahaha!”

Why did Sid’s cries suddenly turn to laughter?

“What, what the? Has this guy became crazy?”

Shambala looked at Ark with confusion after seeing Sid’s strange behaviour. But Sid wasn’t the only strange one. After Sid began laughing, Ark also couldn’t hold it in anymore and started giggling.

“Hahaha!”

“Hahaha!”

“Weren’t we going to act until the end?”

“What about Ark-nim? Nadin, Haverstein and Shambala fell for it.”

“Huhuhu, in order to deceive the enemy we must first deceive our allies.”

“It is wonderful.”

Sid twisted both hands and trembled. Shambala couldn’t understand what was going on.

“What, what the? Are you both crazy?”

“Kuahahaha!”

“Hihihihhi!”

Shambala looked at Ark and Sid rolling around the floor laughing with confusion.

“What? Is there something I don’t know? What is it? I’m getting really angry?”

Shambala frowned with anger and shouted. Ark and Sid barely held in their laughed and sat down.

“You still don’t understand?”

Someone would pay 1 gold to buy the Sacred Blood! The rumour spread among users and they gathered at an auction room. So Ark had bought 20,000 Sacred Blood for 20,000 gold! It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that he had bought most of the Sacred Blood in New World. But he started feeling regretful after buying so much.

‘If I receive a 10% commission for 20,000 gold then that is only a 2,000 gold profit.’

2,000 gold wasn’t a small amount to most people.

‘Isn’t there a way to gain more profit from the Ark of Creation?’

While he was mulling over it, a brilliant idea came to Ark’s head.

‘Nadin will use any chance to remove me from the supply position. What will Nadin do if information about the Sacred Blood and Ark of Creation was given to him beforehand? And if I mention that I’ll have difficult retrieving the Sacred Blood? Nadin will undoubtedly use that chance to think of a scheme. And if I control Nadin’s scheme then it will be possible to obtain more profit for the Sacred Blood!’

This was the special mission Ark left to Sid. So Sid had approached Nadin with information about the Ark of Creation and incited him to think of this competition. That’s right. Ark was the one who planted the idea of having a competition over the Sacred Blood in Nadin’s head. While Ark used Sid to incite Nadin, he was using the Dark Eden members to drive up the prices in the auction.

‘Selling Sacred Blood for 10 gold.’

Ark wrote that sentence but he didn’t really intend to sell the Sacred Blood. No user would spend 10 gold to buy a useless stone. However, users were surprisingly simple. Just a day ago, somebody had bought

huge amounts of that worthless pebble for 1 gold. And now there was a user selling it for 10 gold. The phenomenon led the users to believe that the Sacred Blood could be used somewhere. For example, the Sacred Blood might be a necessary material to make a rare armour. A competition instantly started because of that situation. It was at that point that the merchant's guild in Selebrid started moving to buy the Sacred Blood. So when the merchant's guild contacted the users, the price was an unconditional 10 gold. It was the reason why Nadin and Tito thought the price for the Sacred Blood was 10 gold.

"There was no way anyone could buy it for cheaper. That's why Nadin and Tito firmly believed they would win the competition. They didn't realize that I had bought all the Sacred Blood from the auction a few hours before. Nadin and Tito couldn't know about that situation and believed that Sid had betrayed me so they bought 1,000 Sacred Blood for 10 gold."

"Then how did Tito manage to buy the 1,000 Sacred Blood if you bought all of it?"

Shambala asked in a voice that indicated he couldn't understand. Ark waved his finger and clicked his tongue.

"Tsk tsK tsK, didn't I just say it? Of course it is Sid who sold the Sacred Blood."

Tito had to somehow obtain the 1,000 Sacred Blood in order to obtain the supplier position. So they bought the Sacred Blood that Sid bought for Ark for 10 gold.

"He bought 1,000 Sacred Blood for 10 gold while I bought it for 1 gold. That means a profit of 9,000 gold."

Shambala's mouth widened as he heard Ark's words. It was enormous profits all at once! But 9,000 gold wasn't the only profit Ark received from this strategy.

"Now I can deliver the remaining 19,000 Sacred Blood for 5 gold and 50 silver each. I bought it for 1 gold and will receive 5 gold and 50 silver for

it. So that means the actual amount I will receive is 4 gold and 50 silver. In the end, I will receive 85,500 gold for delivering 19,000 items. Along with the 9,000 gold received from selling to Tito, that is a profit of 94,500 gold for the Sacred Blood. Do you understand?"

94,500 gold!

.....This was Ark's true purpose.

"Y-you scammer!"

"It is a scam. But all business is just a successful scam."

Ark laughed and muttered. That's right. The whole competition with the Sacred Blood was just a scam with Ark as the director and lead actor!

"Although my face ended up as a rice cake....."

Sid muttered as he rubbed his swollen face. In this scam, the star actor was the double agent. Sid who played the double agent had perfectly tricked Nadin and Tito. Furthermore, Sid had acted like a gold digger until the end and received a beating from Nadin. But a laugh just spread on Sid's face. Sid received 20% of the profit from the success of this scam! That was 18,900 gold from the delivery of the Sacred Blood. Who care about a bloody, swollen face with that much profit?

"But what will happen when you run out of the Sacred Blood? You made a contract with the expedition to supply Sacred Blood. But now the market price has increased to 10 gold. Then won't you suffer a loss if you keep on delivering it?"

"The Sacred Blood can only be used for the Ark of Creation. The price has soared to 10 gold but no user will buy it. And I've secured 19,000 Sacred Blood already. No matter how fast they use it, I won't need to purchase the Sacred Blood for a least a few months. If no one buys it within one month then the price will fall again."

That wasn't all. Ark had mobilized his coalition members to buy the Sacred Blood for 99 silver on the auction site. The present market price

was 10 gold but if no one bought it in one month then the users would accept 99 silver as the market price.

"I am the only person who will purchase the Sacred Blood."

It wasn't an item that would become popular.

"So the price will fall continuously. My aim is to make it eventually fall to 1 silver. Then the profit when I deliver the Sacred Blood is 4 gold and 49 silver. Wuhahaha!"

".....Sick."

Shambala shook his head and muttered. But no matter what Shambala thought, Ark and Sid were dancing with joy. Just as Ark was enjoying his happiness.

"Ark-nim!"

Suddenly a messenger shouted from outside his tent.

"It is serious! Nagaran has been attacked by a huge number of monsters!"

"W-what?"

..... It was like a lightning bolt had struck from the heavens.

Act 4: Behind the History

"Dammit!"

Ark cursed as he exited the main tent. Sid and Shambala who were waiting outside ran towards him.

"Ark-nim!"

"Ark, what happened?"

"This whole situation is bad."

Ark muttered nervously as he kicked a stone on the ground.

"The Schudenberg and Bristania kingdoms won't move."

"How come?"

Sid asked in confusion. Ark rubbed his forehead and recalled the situation that happened just then. It all began with the messenger's report. Silvana had been attacked by demonic monsters! After receiving the unimaginable report, Ark flew straight away to headquarters.

"Commander-nim!"

"You came? Take a seat."

The leaders had already received the notification and were meeting in the main tent. Ark was able to hear more specific details about Nagaran. Apparently hundreds of obelisks had been plunged into Nagaran. The number of demons there were 100,000. And 2 territories had fallen immediately. Ark who had listened to the general situation asked in a desperate tone.

"They've already captured 3 territories?"

"Because sieges were forbidden under martial law, most of the estates were empty."

"D-do you know which territories have been occupied?"

"The news was sent from the kingdom. So we don't know which territories have been captured."

Haverstein said with a serious expression.

"I know there are many parts you're worried about but wait for a bit. There is currently a meeting of nobles in progress so we might be able to figure out more about the situation."

Then Haverstein closed his mouth.

‘Have the demonic monsters already captured Silvana?’

Ark had flown to the headquarters to check that information. Yet Haverstein was unaware of which territories had been captured. Ark became jumpy at the idea and thought of contacting the Dark Eden members. But Ark soon shook his head.

‘I can check if Silvana is safe at any time. The important thing is learning how the Schudenberg expedition responds to the invasion.’

That’s right. 100,000 demons had invaded Nagaran so it didn’t matter which territories were occupied. Even if it was still safe, it was only a matter of time before Silvana was occupied. And even if Silvana wasn’t occupied, Ark had no way to prevent it by himself. The fate of Silvana hung on what the Schudenberg Kingdom would do. And the first one to receive the decision of the Kingdom was those inside the headquarters. Ark was thinking that when something interrupted him.

“I don’t understand their intentions.”

“Why are they trying to attack Nagaran.....?”

The unit leaders sighed and complained. The unit leaders weren’t the only ones confused. Currently the Schudenberg expedition was about to enter Silrinad. When the Bristania expedition arrived either tonight or tomorrow then they would begin their invasion of Silrinad.

‘With the Ark of Creation to remove the Sphere of Influence, it won’t take a long time to wipe out all the monsters. And the Demonic War will change 180 degrees when the expedition army regains Silrinad.’

That’s right. It was because the demonic monsters had blocked the users from reviving in the Sinius Principality. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that users played a large role in the wars of New World. When an NPC died it was forever but a user would just revive after 24 hours. The black obelisks had the same function of reviving the demons but the obelisks could be destroyed. Then it would be like an ordinary war. If the users

from the Sinius Principality concentrated their strengths then it wouldn't have been occupied so easily by the demonic monsters. But several thousand obelisks had hit the major cities and towns at the same time so the users and NPCs didn't really have time before it was occupied. The users who registered their recovery places in those cities and towns couldn't revive any more. This was the reason why the Sinius Principality couldn't fight back and became occupied.

'But if the military expedition regains Silrinad.....'

Silrinad was the Sinius Principality's main commercial city and the centre of traffic! There were a considerable number of users who registered it as a resurrection place. Those users would be able to resurrect. With Silrinad secured as a resurrection place, they could spread out to recapture the cities and villages and obtain more places for users to resurrect. It wasn't just the users. Although the regular troops of the Sinius Principality had been killed, not all of them had been wiped out. All the hiding soldiers would gather at Silrinad once it was regained. In addition, if the magic tower was restored then movement between Bristania and Schudenberg would be easy.

'When considering the future war situation, the most important thing for the demonic monsters was to defend Silrinad. If they can prevent the expedition from recapturing Silrinad then it would prevent the expansion of power. But to mobilize a high number of demons to attack Nagaran out of nowhere.....'

This was the part that confused Ark and the unit leaders.

"Their purpose might not be Nagaran itself."

Then a unit commander who was carefully locked in thought said.

"Nagaran is an area which borders to the Bristania and Schudenberg kingdom. Then aren't they occupying Nagaran in order to intimidate both countries and seal the expedition's movements while the gather monsters around Silrinad?"

"It is a strategy to intimidate us and seal our movements?"

Haverstein narrowed his eyes and murmured. If they thought like that then it was possible to understand the movement of the demonic monsters. Nagaran was an area which bordered the three kingdoms. In other words, if they occupied Nagaran then it was possible to advance into any kingdom. The aristocrats of Schudenberg and Bristania would have no choice but to feel uneasy. If they judged that protecting their own kingdom was more important than freeing the Sinius Principality then they might recall the expeditions to prepare for an invasion. The armies would have no choice but to return to their home kingdoms. Like Haverstein said, it was a strategy to threaten the body and seal the arms! But another leader said in a sceptical voice.

“That makes some sense. But can the demons really move that strategically?”

“Didn’t we have a hard time capturing Pabiun Fortress because the demons showed surprising tactics?”

“But they didn’t show those type of movements after that. We spent three days moving here. If the demons knew the importance of Silrinad then they should’ve responded earlier. But they haven’t used such good strategy anywhere else.”

“Then what do you think their aim is?”

“That.....”

The leader who objected sighed and closed his mouth. In the end, little progress was made in the meeting.

“It is difficult for us to accurately judge the situation in Nagaran. Anyway, I will connect with the kingdom and ask the opinion of His Majesty. His Majesty will decide how to respond to this problem.”

Eventually Haverstein forced the problem onto the King. After that, the magician in charge of communication used a crystal ball and connected to the kingdom. The aristocrat meeting had already been held and they finished discussing how to cope with the situation. When the

communication was connected, the conclusion of the meeting was passed on.

If the intention of the demons was to tie the ankles of the expedition then there was no reason to be fooled. The nobles also didn't have to deal with the demonic monsters so they didn't respond sensitively to the threat. In addition, the demons had stopped their movements after capturing Silvana, Radon and Beiku. Even if they wanted to threaten the other kingdoms, there was enough time to build a line of defense. The military expedition could focus on recapturing Silrinad.

"T-then Silvana has been captured?"

Sid shouted with a pale face after hearing the explanation.

"Don't say it again!"

Ark shouted with a displeased expression. Ark had felt utterly gloomy after hearing the news. Then Shambala asked in a sarcastic tone.

"What will you do? Will you die now that your territory was taken away?"

"The estate hasn't been completely lost."

Ark scowled at Shambala and declared sharply. That's right. The demonic monsters hadn't taken the ownership of Silvana away but just occupied it. The rule that the three kingdoms set was that only those who won in the siege would claim ownership. And Ark was the proper Lord of Silvana. If he drove the demons away then Silvana would be returned to Ark. So there was still hope that Ark could regain Silvana.

'Hopefully the demons didn't do too much damage when they occupied it.'

Shortly after receiving the message, the Continental Commerce Firm was the first thing that came to his mind. Even if he managed to take back Silvana, the place where his current supplies for the expedition were stored was the Continental Commerce Firm. The goods from

Seutandal had been shipped and stored in the Continental Commerce Firm. If the Continental Commerce Firm was attacked by the demons and the supplies destroyed then Ark would become bankrupt. But luckily the demons didn't attack Silvana from outside. They had driven the black obelisks around the castle and attacked. When the demons concentrated on the castle, the staff of the Continental Commerce Firm managed to obtain the supplies in the warehouse and escaped.

'The NPC coalition members are also safe.'

Naturally all the users who protected the castle had died from the monsters. But the users could resurrect. The problem was the Meow, Wolrang and Eastern Nation NPCs in the coalition. If they died then it would be a fatal blow to Dark Eden. But fortunately the coalition members had followed Ark's instructions and had been training in the secret dungeon. Therefore they didn't know the castle was being attacked until Ark contacted them.

"But....."

Ark murmured as he bit his lip. Ark still received some damage. Since the castle was occupied by the demons, the monthly salary disappeared. That was 18,000 gold for one month. Of course, not all of that salary went into Ark's pocket but it was still thousands of gold a month. But was that all? Thanks to all his investments, the B class promotion had been just around the corner. But if it was occupied by the demons then the territory would clearly become impoverished. If the facilities and farmland was destroyed then the rating of the territory would fall. Even if he obtained the territory back, there was no guarantee how much time it would take to recover.

"Now's not the time to be talking about this!"

Sid jumped and shouted.

"Don't you think I know that already?"

Ark yelled in an annoyed voice. It was unnecessary to say but every second the estate was receiving some damage. But unless the

Schudenberg kingdom moved, there was no way to retake Silvana. Dark Eden only had 3,800 troops. And there were 1,500 NPCs and 300 users, for a total of 1,800 troops stuck in the secret dungeon. Despite the situation, he also couldn't give up the delivery of goods..... No, with the income from the estate gone then he had to have JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members work even harder to supply the goods. In the end, if Ark wanted to retake Silvana then he would have to fight the 100,000 monsters by himself. 100,000 against 1..... Ark would be swept away instantly.

'It is stressful but there is nothing I can do. In this situation, I have no choice but to give up on Silvana for the moment. If we win the Demonic War then Silvana can be taken back so I should concentrate on the military supplies.'

That was the conclusion Ark came to after thinking for a while. But Sid became even more frantic.

"You're going to just give up?"

"Damn, what am I supposed to do?"

"Isn't there any way at all?"

"Do you think I haven't considered all possibilities? No, why are you in such an uproar about it?"

"T-that....."

Sid flinched and stuttered before sighing. The reason Sid was in such an uproar was the Silvana's real estate. Like mentioned before, Sid had earned quite a lot of money from working at the Continental Commerce Firm. And his talk about owning a store in Selebrid was just to deceive Nadin. His real goal was a real estate venture!

'Huhuhu, if I invested in real estate then I can increase my money. Ark-nim also made a lot by investing in Lancel. Then I can also do that.'

So Sid used Ark as a role model and stated to buy real estate in Silvana. Silvana was an appropriate place for Sid to invest in. Contribution to the area was necessary to possess real estate. Thanks to working at the Continental Commerce Firm, Sid had increased Silvana's economy and earned quite a bit of contribution. He also knew about Ark's secret funds that he planned to use to develop Silvana. In other words, it meant that the land value would 100% rise as time passed.

'If the rating of the estate rises then the real estate value will also rise!'

Sid determined that and poured his saved money into the real estate. But if the territory became impoverished because of the demons then the real estate price would slump. Like Ark said, there was no guarantee on how long it would take to recover.

"It is the herbs to the rice." (I think he is comparing Sid as the herb to Ark who is the rice)

Shambala murmured with a pitying expression.

".....Well, I understand but it is inevitable. Just give up for now. It's not like the demonic monsters care about living there. If the Demonic War ends then we can recover it somehow."

"That's not it."

Sid sighed and said.

"Do you really not know? Why did the demons attack Silvana?"

"Isn't it to plunge the real estate price?"

Ark muttered sarcastically. Sid nodded with a firm expression and replied.

"Yes, that's it!"

"What? You figured out something about the demons?"

"It is because of Ark-nim's enemy!"

“Me?”

“.....Alan!”

Ark’s face stiffened at Sid’s answer.

“Isn’t Alan controlling the demonic monsters? Isn’t that why they attacked Silvana? They clearly want to destroy Silvana!”

‘Oh my god, why did I never think of that guy?’

His relaxed feeling melted away at the sound of Alan’s name. His biggest question at the moment was why the demons had attacked Nagaran. What if their purpose was to attack Silvana? And couldn’t Alan control the demonic monsters?

.....Then the answer was simple.

‘Alan might intend to occupy Silvana in order to damage me. He rallied the demons to make Silvana a barren land.’

It was possible if he used the various skills that belonged to the demons to pollute the land. If Ark recovered Silvana then the damage he would receive wouldn’t be small.

‘That Alan bastard, he really won’t let go until the end!’

Ark grinded his teeth together as he thought of this. Then Ark felt something strange.

‘Wait? Is that really Alan’s only purpose?’

If Silvana became barren then it would be a huge blow to Ark. But in the end, that would be it. Silvana couldn’t still be valuable without the farmland. Silvana had easy to navigate terrain and a river available for transport of goods. Its strong point was its geographical advantageous position in Nagaran. That geographic advantage wouldn’t disappear even if the land became barren.

‘Alan used to be the Lord of Silvana and he is a user in New World so he should already know this. It is impossible for him not to understand Silvana’s special quality. Then he only rallied 100,000 monsters to make the territory barren?’

Moreover, the military expedition was now about to attack Silrinad.

‘Alan moving overseas means that he is one of the ones behind this event. He wouldn’t do something simply for revenge. Alan is clearly getting something very important from this war.’

Yet he risked losing the war and brought 100,000 monsters to Nagaran just to damage Ark?

‘If Alan is moving then it must have something to do with this event. Is it simply to tie the ankle of the Schudenberg expedition? Or is there something else? It can’t be.....’

.....Silvana itself?

‘Wait! Let me organize my thoughts.’

The more he thought about it, the more complicated Ark’s head became. First, was Silvana occupied to grab the ankle of the Schudenberg expedition? According to the intelligence, they had stopped moving after capturing Silvana and 2 other territories.

.....So the probability was less than 10%.

Secondly, was Silvana captured in order for Alan to hit back at Ark? It was a possibility but Silvana would return to Ark when the Demonic War ended. Since Silvana’s value lay in its geographic advantage, the actual blow wasn’t that big.

.....The probability was less than 40%.

‘There is only one reason why Alan gave up on Silrinad and attacked Nagaran. It is because Silvana contains something that he believes will win the Demonic War.’

When he thought about it like that, it was possible to explain while the demonic monsters stopped moving after they captured Radon and Beiku which surrounded Silvana. If Silvana was their goal then there would be no reason to capture Radon and Beiku. In fact, it might incite the Schudenberg and Bristania kingdoms even more if they occupied more estates. However the demons only captured the two territories on both sides of Silvana.

‘Their reason for capturing Radon and Beiku is to block any possible attacks!’

It might be a bit of a stretch. But according to the defending coalition members, the Rwigenberg had appeared in the sky about Silvana. Rwigenberg was the Red Man’s aerial fortress. Therefore the Red Man was related to why Alan attacked Silvana.

‘There is something there. Just like the secret dungeon that the Three Kingdoms don’t know about, there must be something hidden there!’

Ark was convinced of his guess. It was highly likely that this was the key to solving the situation.

‘Then the reason Silvana was attacked has something to do with the future of this war? Whatever it is will change the situation by 180 degrees. It is necessary to find the reason why the demons are attacking Silvana. If I can prove it.....’

The Schudenberg and Bristania kingdoms were just observing the situation because they judged that it wouldn’t have a big influence on the Demonic War. However, couldn’t the secret hidden in Silvana change the tides of the war? If both kingdoms knew that then they would rally their power to regain Silvana!

‘It is imperative that I find out what it is!’

“Radun, transform to Radunma!”

Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Ark who was locked in though suddenly shouted. Radun instantly turned in a giant lizard. Sid looked at Radun and asked with a flustered look.

“Eek! What, what the? Why all of a sudden?”

“There is a place I have to go.”

“A place you have to go? Where? What about Silvana?”

“There’s no time to explain. Let’s go Radun!”

Radun then ran off through the snowfield.

Pa pa pa pa, pa pa pa pa!

Radun moved with tremendous speed across the snowfield. The place Ark was riding was towards the Albana Mountains. No, to be correct it was Shangri-La. That’s right. After worrying about how to figure out Silvana’s secret, Ark had thought of Shangri-La. Currently Ark couldn’t guess what Alan wanted from Silvana. But some records of Silvana should remain. Shangri-La held the history of New World so if he looked for information about Silvana then wouldn’t he find a clue?

‘I have to quickly discover Alan’s plan so I can stop it!’

After a while he finally arrived at the snow-capped Albana Mountains. It had taken the expedition three days to pass through the Albana Mountains to Silrinad and it had only taken Ark 14 hours to return. It was thanks to Radun’s +500% movement speed and riding without a break.

“Only a bit more to go. Try your best Radun!”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

Ark comforted the gasping Radunma while pushing him onwards. His short legs began to move even faster. Ark glanced around while using Nursing on Radunma.

‘That’s it, if I pass that gorge then I’ll reach Shangri-La.’

The defense war had turned off and Shangri-La had floated back to its position on the ground. This was because the demonic monsters had retreated after Ark arrived in Shangri-La. The demons probably already realized that the Ark of Creation was in his hands and retreated. And not long afterwards, Ark had joined the expedition and helped capture Pabiun Fortress. At the same time, the demonic monsters withdrew from the Albana Mountains so there was no reason for the defense ward to be activated. As soon as he crossed the gorge, the site of Shangri-La reached his eyes.

‘What the?’

But confusion spread over Ark’s face as he looked at Shangri-La. It looked different from the Shangri-La that he saw before. The forest was burnt and the defensive tower from before had disappeared without a trace. Even the white tower in the middle was smashed in parts.

“Radun, stop. Summon Demon, Racard and Purital!”

Ark stopped in front of Shangri-La and summoned his pets.

“Racard, enter Shangri-La and find out what happened. Purital, be on the lookout for any monsters!”

“Yes!”

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Racard flapped his wings and flew away. Ark carefully entered Shangri-La with Purital escorting him. The situation became clearer once he entered. The trees surrounding the white tower were cut with claw marks while blood spots were scattered over the snow covered ground. It was unmistakable signs of a battle!

‘The only culprits that would attack Shangri-La are the demons. But why?’

The demons had targeted the Ark of Creation. However, the expedition force had already obtained the Ark of Creation. Then it wasn’t the reason the demons had attacked Shangri-La?

“Master, there are no demons around. There are some White Tigers and prophets around the tower. But they are dead.”

Then he heard Racard’s voice who had been scouting. Ark ran straight towards the white tower on Radunma. Like Racard said, the dead bodies of the White Tigers and prophets were scattered around the tower.

“20 White Tigers and 10 prophets..... They were all wiped out?”

Ark muttered as he counted the bodies. Originally there were 150 White Tigers and 20 prophets living in Shangri-La. But they couldn’t hand the Ark of Creation over to an unknown person. That was why Lariette had been accompanied by 10 prophets carrying the Ark of Creation. 130 White Tigers had come along to protect them on the battlefield. Therefore that he only been 20 White Tigers and 10 prophets left in Shangri-La.

Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radunma who had been licking the air suddenly turned his head. At the same time, one of the prophets lying on the ground flinched and moaned.

“Eung..... Eung.....”

‘A survivor!’

Ark hurriedly jumped down from Radunma. He forcibly opened the mouth and poured 3~4 potions into the prophet’s mouth. The prophet narrowed his eyes and asked.

“W-who.....”

"It's me. Ark. What happened?"

"Ark..... Hero Maban's descendant..... Cough!"

When the prophet coughed, his health instantly drained away.

.....It was already too late to him. In this situation, the NPC was sure to die unless a priest used magic to heal the soul. Feeding them potions was the same. Their health would just decrease over time.

"Have strength. You can beat this."

But after Ark grabbed his hands and used Nursing, the prophet regained some vigour.

"After you left with the Ark of Creation, a black knight..... Leading the demons..... Shangri-La was attacked."

"A black knight?"

Alan instantly popped into Ark's head. In fact, Ark had thought there was one strange part while attacking Pabiun Fortress. The demons in Pabiun Canyon had been coordinated by Alan. But he never saw Alan while capturing Pabiun Fortress. It was the same even when marching through Pabiun Canyon towards Silrinad.

'Then he ended up attacking Shangri-La?'

"But wasn't their purpose to obtain the Ark of Creation? Shouldn't they know that you don't have the Ark of Creation anymore?"

"Their purpose..... From the beginning it wasn't the Ark of Creation..... It seems."

"It wasn't the Ark of Creation?"

"Yes. The knight in black armour..... Took the Hell Stone stored underneath Shangri-La....."

"Hell Stone? Why?"

“That is..... Why the knight took it..... I don’t know exactly. Along with some powerful demons..... Stepped into the History Crystal..... And left in a hurry.”

‘History Crystal!’

Ark’s eyes flashed. Hundreds of crystals were lined up in the tower. Each one had 10 years of history recorded in it. And this network of crystals was connected to the History Crystal.

‘Alan entered the History Crystal before leaving in a hurry?’

Alan had immediately attacked Shangri-La after Ark left so that was three days ago. And the demonic monsters had invaded Nagaran yesterday. This couldn’t be a coincidence.

‘Yes, it is simple once I think about it. They must’ve just discovered that they thing they seek is in Silvana. That means they didn’t originally know it was in Silvana. Their purpose in attacking Shangri-La wasn’t to obtain the Ark of Creation but to get information!’

And it was likely that the strike against Silvana was organized by Alan. In fact, the coalition who defended the castle had testified that there were users mixed in with the monsters.

‘There’s no doubt about it. Alan occupied Silvana after getting the information here! Then I can also figure out what he is after!’

“Rest for a while. Purital, Racard, protect him.”

Ark who reached a conclusion moved the prophet to a suitable place and ran inside the tower. Despite the shattered tower, the crystals inside were all fine. According to the prophets, the crystals were protected with divine power so it couldn’t be broken. After searching the tower for a bit, Ark was able to discover an enormous lump of crystal. It was the History Crystal that all the other ones connected to! Ark belatedly realized something after discovering the crystal.

“How do I use this? Damn, I should’ve asked the prophet…… Ah. Didn’t the prophet say that Alan went into the History Crystal? Then is there a door to enter the crystal?”

Ark had that thought and touched the crystal. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-You have connected to the History Crystal.

Do you want to view the information on the History Crystal?

“What? I can enter just by touching it?”

Ark who read the message instantly nodded and replied.

“Yes!”

Hwaaaaack!

It was at that moment. His body was suddenly sucked into the crystal. He felt like he had been swept into a hurricane as he flew somewhere before the space in front of him brightened.

“Heok! T-this is……”

Ark’s mouth opened as he looked at the intense light. Before he was standing in front of the crystal and now Ark was in an endless space. Both the floor and sky were covered in space. And in this space were thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands…… No, an incalculable number of crystal slabs were floating around him.

“No way, all of this……”

-It is the information contained in the History Crystal.

Suddenly a woman’s voice was heard in his head.

“Heok! W-who?”

-I am a navigation system to help users comfortably search for the information on the History Crystal. You can call me Miss Navi as a nickname in order to feel more comfortable.

A navigation system? It was hidden in a secret sanctuary so wasn't it too excessive to have a user friendly crystal? Furthermore, she wanted to be called by Miss Navi? Was this a joke? Didn't she know this was a serious situation? Ark pushed down the desire to say those words.

"Okay, then I will call you Miss Navi. How do I search for the information I want?"

-Just cry out the keyword for the information you are searching for.

"Keyword? Isn't this similar to searching on the internet? Then....."
Silvana!"

Bang, bang, bang, bang, bang!

At the same time, a huge amount of slabs started gathering. And with a roar they piled up in front of Ark. The pile was dozens of metres high! Ark opened his mouth and murmured absent-mindedly.

"T-this is all the information related to Silvana?"

-That's right. You can read from the top.

Each slab contained one chapter holding different information.

The [Demons] in the [Dark Century] waged a war against humans in [Nagaran] and after the Dark Century ended, a war between the three kingdoms [Schudenberg], [Bristania] and [Sinius] began. Then came the [Foreigners] as they waged battle over the right to the territory. And the current Lord of [Silvana] is [Ark].

The Silvana territory is 126,785 square metres, the amount of rainfall.....

As expected, the most basic information was recorded in the beginning. But some words written on the slabs caught his attention. They were words marked with [].

“What the? These indications are?”

-They are words that allow you to search for more detailed information. Just press your hand to it and the relevant information will be displayed.

Ark was curious and pressed his hand to the word [Ark]. Then 1 slab flew from the pile.

| | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------|---|-------------|
| Character Name | Ark | Race | Human |
| Alignment | Good +500 | Nobility Title | Baron |
| Fame | 23,535 (+500) | Level | 439 |
| Profession | | Dark Soul | |
| Title | | Cat Knight, Caretaker of the People, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer, Magic Institute Member, Seutandal's Hero | |
| Health | 8,175 (+475) | Mana | 8,365(+325) |
| Spiritual Power | 956 | Strength | 844 (+34) |
| Agility | 1,159 (+170) | Stamina | 1,389 (+65) |
| Wisdom | 185 (+10) | Intelligence | 1,527 (+25) |
| Luck | 209 (+60) | Flexibility | 268 |
| Art of Communication | 79 | Affection | 129 (+10) |
| Resilience | 483 | Dark Fog | 74 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics | 233 |
| * Equipment item effects | |
| Guardian Armour of the Merpeople (Armour): Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified. | |
| Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10% | |
| Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10 | |
| Wolf's Feet (Shoes): Agility + 40, Movement Speed +40%, Attack Speed +10%, 'Jump' is available | |
| *<Animal King> Set effect: Strength + 35, Agility + 35, Stamina +35, Defense +70, Wild Strength is available | |
| Shining Darkness (Two-handed Sword): +10% additional damage against demonic monsters, Agility +20, Stamina +20, Intelligence +20 | |
| Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3 | |
| White Tiger's Cloak (Mantle): immune to skills that lower morale, Courage +30%, Agility +30, White Tiger's Roar is available | |
| Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available | |
| Rarukan's Ring (Ring): Agility + 10, Attack Speed +10%, Critical Hit +8%, 'Dark Protection' available | |
| Ark's Ring (Ring): Strength + 5, Agility + 5, Stamina + 5, Wisdom + 5, Intelligence + 5, 'Sudden Increase in Power' available | |
| Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds | |
| Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5% | |

- * All abilities will increase by 50% in the dark
- * You have the ability to hide in the darkness (30 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)
- * Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.
- * You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.
- * Shock absorption is increased by 20%.
- * Poison resistance has increased by 50%.
- * 10% increased attack and defense.

‘That’s right. Now I understand how to look for information.’

So Ark started to look through the information about Silvana. But after 1 hour of searching through hundreds of slabs, Ark couldn’t find the information that he wanted.

‘Weird. There’s something weird.’

Ark realized that he had been feeling a strange uneasiness. The information in the History Crystal was incredibly detailed. It even had the weather information for Silvana over the last hundreds of years. And if he used the [] indications then he could see for information so detailed it was almost trivial.

‘But the record for Silvana and Nagaran only goes back hundreds of years. It is impossible to search for details prior to that.’

That was exactly the problem. Other areas had records from before the Dark Century. But the information on Silvana and Nagaran only goes back to the Dark Century. To be exact, it connects to the information about the Dark Century. Yet he couldn’t search for any general information about Silvana during the Dark Century. It was like someone had intentionally hidden the records.....

‘Then I should do a more direct keyword search.....’

Alan found something related to the Demonic War. And the last Demonic War was in the Dark Century. Then the information was likely to be on the records about the Dark Century. The problem was he didn’t know what keyword to search for. But he couldn’t just look for the information blindly.

‘Alan left in a hurry after finding the necessary information. Then Alan must’ve known the keyword and searched for that information.’

Then something popped into Ark’s head.

‘Wait? Alan didn’t just come to Shangri-La to search for information. The prophet said that Alan also stole a Hell Stone. Then didn’t that Hell Stone have something to do with Alan and Silvana? Then.....’

“Search, Hell Stone!”

Ark finished thinking and shouted. While he had been searching so far, the related slabs had flown to him. But this time the space suddenly warped. In the next moment, the environment turned black and there was a huge barrier of flames.

“Huk, what is this?”

-A firewall. The information of the keyword you searched for just now is kept in a secured area. You have to enter a password if you want to view the information.

Navi’s voice was heard. Firewall? Password? There really were various things. How could Ark know the password to the firewall? But unlike Navi’s explanation, he didn’t need a password to access the area.

“This.....!”

A small hole caught Ark’s eyes. It was a small area near the bottom of the firewall that had warped. Ark was convinced after he visited the hole.

‘That’s right. The prophet said Alan and some high ranking demons entered the crystal. Then Alan was aware of the existence of the firewall in advance?’

Alan had used the skills of the demons to penetrate the firewall. In other words, the information Alan had been searching for was beyond this firewall. And he could also access the firewall thanks to Alan. Ark quickly passed through the firewall. There was a large room behind the firewall with 10 slabs piled up. Unlike the other slabs, these ones were black.

‘That Alan, he must’ve been in a hurry. To leave a trail like this....’

Ark instantly checked the slab on top. But when he lifted the slab, there was a sudden noise and he couldn’t check the contents. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-You are lacking the ability to read this information.

<300 Knowledge of Ancient Relics is required to confirm the information. Or 300 points in Hieroglyphic Deciphering. 300 Pursuit of Truth is needed>

“What, what the? I need 300 Knowledge of Ancient Relics to read the information?”

Ark hurriedly checked the other slabs. All the other slabs needed Knowledge of Ancient Relics, Pursuit of Truth or professions like Treasure Hunter or a druid type profession to decipher the information. Fortunately, not all of them required the same level of knowledge.

‘I currently have 233 Knowledge of Ancient Relics. I’ll gather all the slabs I can decipher at the moment. I might now be able to check all the information that Alan searched for but I can put together the general outline.’

Ark organized the 10 slabs based on his Knowledge of Ancient Relics. In the end there was a separate collection of 4 slabs.

‘That is less than half. But it should be enough for the general principles.’

“Now, shall I check Alan’s ulterior motive?”

Ark laughed and touched one of the slabs. Then the slab vibrated and the information appeared in front of him.

-You have found the history hidden behind the History Crystal.

This hidden history is dangerous if leaked outside so the ancient prophets hid it. This hidden history also wasn’t passed down through the prophet clan.

<Knowledge of Ancient Relics +25, Intelligence +20, Luck +10 and Fame increased by 200>

The slab was unsealed and the contents appeared.

“Huh? “What the, this is?”

A baffled exclamation fell from Ark’s mouth. The first slab was a map. It showed Seutandal and two other continents that had emerged in the northern oceans of New World. This slab had been hidden a long time ago and Seutandal was marked there so it was probably before the Dark Century. But Nagaran had been strangely marked on the map. He was able to discover the reason after checking the remaining slabs he could read.

.....When the Dark Lord appeared, the boundaries between hell and reality collapsed and the Hell River flooded through the centre of New World. The Hell River spread a powerful curse and strengthened the demonic monsters.....

..... When flooded with the Hell River, the curse is so powerful that no humans can live on that land for the next 60 years. Various demons also used the Hell River as sources of powerful curse magic.....

.....Until the 7 legendary heroes and the 100 heroes used their magic to seal the Hell River deep underneath Nagaran. But the Hell River couldn't be sent back to hell. It could only be sealed underground and a mechanism was created to stop the hell power from floating outside.

.....The 7 legendary heroes and the 100 heroes brought the Hell Stone which controls that hellish power to Shangri-La to be hidden. But the Truth Crystal showed that the Dark Lord would be resurrected one day. And only the foreigners could save this world. The heroes learnt about the crisis in the future and offered their lives to prepare for it.....

"Hell River!"

Ark learnt why Nagaran was marked on the map. That's right. It was because of the Hell River that appeared from the impact of the Dark Lord showing up. And the 7 legendary heroes and 100 heroes sealed the river deep underground in.....

".....Silvana!"

All of Ark's questions was answered with that information. Ark had already seen the Hell River in the lowest floor of Silvana's secret dungeon. But the Hell River he saw had been sealed by the power of the heroes. It was the reason why Nagaran didn't belong to any of the Three Kingdoms after the Dark Century ended. Since the Hell River caused barren land for 60 years, none of the kingdoms had asserted their rights to Nagaran. Then after 60 years passed, the Three Kingdoms began a war for control of Nagaran. But that was not the problem. The 7 legendary heroes and 100 veterans weren't able to completely seal the Hell River. So they made a device that ensured Nagaran's safety for hundreds of years. And the key to that device was the Hell Stone! After confirming the information about the Hell River, he had seized the Hell Stone and disappeared. He didn't need to check the rest of the slabs to determine Alan's goal.

"Oh my god! He wants to flood Nagaran again with the Hell River!"

Ark's face turned white and terrified. Ark had thought he could recover Silvana after the Demonic War. But if the Hell River was unsealed then nobody could live on that land for 60 years. If he calculated it in real time, 60 years was 20 years. It would be the end of Silvana if the Hell River flooded. In addition, the Hell River was like the sphere of influence in that it strengthened curse magic and turned normal monsters into demons. He didn't know how big, but it would have a tremendous impact on the Demonic War.

'There's no time to waste. I have to stop Alan!'

Ark left the firewall and shouted.

"Miss Navi, what is the method to exit the History Crystal?"

-Just shout 'End.'

"Okay. E....."

Ark stopped as he was about to exit the crystal. The History Crystal contained information about all the history and people of New World.

'Then I might be able to figure out the reason for Alan's strange strength!'

"Information search, Alan!"

Ark used Alan as a keyword. And one slab came flying. Alan's information was contained on the slab.

".....What, what the? Ruin Knight? Then Alan is the Ruin Knight?"

Ark muttered as he read the information. Alan was originally a Holy Knight. Of course, Lariette had become an Innocence Knight so he knew that Alan must've changed professions. But he never imagined that Alan would change to a Ruin Knight. Ark had originally guessed that the Red Man was the Ruin Knight.

‘Damn, after searching Alan I was going to look for information about the Red Man and Ruin Knight..... Yet Alan and the Ruin Knight was the same person.’

He also didn’t know the name of the Red Man so he couldn’t search for information.

‘By the way, isn’t something odd? Alan can’t be more than level 400. Even if he got the Hate Aura from the Hate Set, how did he manage to match my dark attribute bonus?’

Ark tried to search for information about the ‘Ruin Knight’s skills’. But the message window stated that the keyword didn’t exist.

‘It would’ve been helpful to know but I guess it isn’t possible. I have no more time for this!

“End search!”

Ark’s body moved towards the sky and he exited the History Crystal. The prophet was dead after he left the tower.

“The prophet died suddenly after Master entered.

Racard said while scratching his ears. However, he had no time to mourn the death of the prophet.

“Radun, transform to Radunma!” Head back to Silrinad!”

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radunma once again ran across the snowfield. At that moment Ark still couldn’t imagine. The fearful contents recorded on the slabs that Ark couldn’t confirm.....

Act 5: Nagaran’s Coalition

[TL] People seem to be misunderstanding what happened with the slabs last chapter so I thought I would clear it up a bit. The slabs don't seem to be an ancient relic since he didn't get any bonuses from reading the normal slabs. The message window which popped up is also different from the normal Ancient Relics message windows. The +25 ancient relic is just part of the onetime bonus that he got for finding the 'hidden history' not reading an ancient relic. Therefore he wouldn't get any bonuses from reading the other slabs. Even if that wasn't the case, it was stated that each slab had varying levels of requirements. For all we know, those requirements could be 355/400 Knowledge of Ancient Relics. Therefore, the only thing we do know is that there were some slabs that Ark wasn't able to read.

"Rulrulru....."

Gwon Hwa-rang hummed and smiled. Something about Gwon Hwa-rang was different today. He had polished his shoes, applied a face mask earlier and even shaved his beard. Instead of wearing his old leather jacket, he was wearing a sharp suit. Gwon Hwa-rang was fully armed because today was the day of the decisive battle.

"Huhuhuhu."

Gwon Hwa-rang laughed like a crazy person as he took out a small box from his pocket. And he slowly opened the box. Inside the box was a ring. Although it wasn't very big but it was still a diamond studded ring..... That's right. Today was 'the day.' A satisfied feeling rose inside Gwon Hwa-rang as he looked at the box.

'It has come! The day has come!'

Gwon Hwa-rang had been waiting for 'this day' for a few years. However, a few trivial problems had popped up that prevented him. And the most worrisome problem was Gwon Hwa-rang himself. After being stabbed in the leg with a knife, his leg had a

limp. Furthermore, public opinion was against him and he had been reluctantly driven from police work. He couldn't stay at work with a disability. He had a great sense of pride in his work so the loss was difficult for Gwon Hwa-rang to express in words. He felt like a straggler abandoned by the world. Of course, the police considered the circumstances and gave him management of the ex-convicts rehabilitation program but he still felt a sense of loss. In this situation he hadn't even dare try. However, Gwon Hwa-rang's situation changed dramatically two years ago.

Over the last few years, Gwon Hwa-rang had gradually recovered and lost his injury. And he unintentionally received an income from the various work he did helping Hyun-woo. It wasn't just Gwon Hwa-rang that changed. Two years ago Hyun-woo also started to gradually raise his income for so his lifestyle had improved. Park So-mi was also quickly recovering. All these changes to Gwon Hwa-rang, Hyun-woo and Park So-mi were because of New World. Their health and income improved because of New World.

"Ah, my life had been a dark tunnel. But I encountered New World and my life changed. Darkness changed to light and despair changed to hope. I've been saved. Hallelujah!"

Anyway, the present situation had changed around Gwon Hwa-rang. And the timing was important. Gwon Hwa-rang might've wavered in the last few years but he had finally made up his mind.

Pro-po-sal!

That's right. That was what Gwon Hwa-rang had been hesitating several years over. And he finally decided today was 'the day.' His heart trembled at the thought of proposing to Park So-mi. According to Hyun-woo, his success rate if he proposed now was 90%. Therefore Gwon Hwa-rang's confidence increased because of Hyun-woo.

'Then.....'

His chest felt tight as he arrived in front of the house. He visited the house often so it felt like home but now it seemed large and scary. But overcoming that horror was the true sign of a man!

'I'm going to do it! I will! Gwon Hwa-rang, if you're a man then you can do it!'

Gwon Hwa-rang placed the ring box back in his pocket and entered the house. Gwon Hwa-rang grinned as Park So-mi greeted him at the door.

"Welcome."

"Ah, this is it, this is it. What I wish.....'

For a wife to lovingly greet her husband when he comes home. It might've been an ordinary routine for others but the thought was impressive enough to cause tears to flow for Gwon Hwa-rang. It was impressive for a man who lived by himself for decades. It might be because he had decided to propose today but Park So-mi was looking exceptionally pretty. With neatly arranged hair and wearing a blue cardigan, a beautiful light appeared around her even when she was sitting in the wheelchair.

"I'm a little surprised. You suddenly wanted to eat out and now you're wearing conservative clothes. Am I underdressed?"

"Ah, no. You look beautiful. Really pretty! So pretty that my head has become strange!"

Gwon Hwa-rang jumped with surprise and hurriedly said. Park So-mi blushed and turned to look at the door to Hyun-woo's game room.

"Thank you. But what is that boy doing? A guest has come to that house and he doesn't even show his face."

"No, it's okay. Since when have I been a guest? He seems to be busy so let's just leave."

"Then we're the only ones going out today?"

"Huh? Oh, yes.....I call Hyun-woo earlier today and he said he was too busy to go anywhere."

"Then isn't it better to go next time? Isn't this a precious experience eating out?"

"That.....it has already been booked. We can't just cancel.....we'll have another chance next time with Hyun-woo."

Gwon Hwa-rang prevaricated like Hyun-woo taught him. Fortunately Park So-mi didn't question him and just nodded.

"Really? Then it can't be helped. Sorry but can you push the wheelchair?"

"Yes, I'll be happy to! I'll push it forever!"

Gwon Hwa-rang enthusiastically grabbed the wheelchair handle. Park So-mi looked at him strangely as Gwon Hwa-rang's attitude seemed different from normal.

"Well, is something good happening? We're suddenly eating out and your attire seems different from usual....."

"A good thing? There is."

"What is it? Am I not supposed to know?"

"That's impossible. I'll tell you slowly over the meal."

Gwon Hwa-rang laughed and was about to push the wheelchair.

Kwatang, udandandang!

Suddenly there was a commotion and Hyun-woo ran out of his room. Gwon Hwa-rang and Park So-mi turned their heads with surprise and looked at him.

"Eh? Hyun-woo? What's the matter?"

"Don't make me talk. I'm busy now!"

Hyun-woo didn't even look at them and picked up the telephone quickly. He pressed the buttons at a furious speed and called someone.

Diririri, diririri.....

Then the cell phone in Gwon Hwa-rang's chest pocket rang and he took it out. Hyun-woo's desperate voice was heard from two phones.

"Gwon ajusshi? Where are you now?"

"What are you doing?"

Gwon Hwa-rang muttered in an incredulous voice. Hyun-woo alternating looking at the phone and Gwon Hwa-rang standing by the door with a confused expression. He belatedly realized the situation and threw the phone away before running towards Gwon Hwa-rang.

"Gwon ajusshi, it's serious!"

"It's serious? What are you saying?"

"I can't do this now. Call the rehabilitation hyungs here because I need to speak with them."

"Hey, you. Have you already forgotten? Today's the day."

"I don't know what day it is when Silvana might disappear!"

Hyun-woo pulled his hair and shouted.

"What the, that is ridiculous....."

Jjak-tung stuttered with an absurd look. It wasn't just Jjak-tung. All the rehabilitation members summoned to the emergency meeting also looked the same. The contents of Hyun-woo's words were shocking. Silvana had been attacked by demonic monsters! And Alan's purpose was to unseal the Hell River on the lowest floor of Silvana's

secret dungeon and flood Nagaran. In addition, if the Hell River was unsealed then everything would die and not even a blade of grass would grow for the next 60 years. Nagaran would become like a non-existent land on maps.

"It really is absurd."

What is that fellow thinking?"

Bul-kkun muttered after hearing the explanations.

Then Yapsab sneered and retorted.

"Do you have to ask? Of course it is revenge."

"That's not the only reason.

Hyun-woo said as he shook his head.

"It's not? Then what else is there?"

"I haven't told you this but the things happening in New World now isn't a scheduled event. A group which exists in New World is using an item which shouldn't exist to cause chaos. And Alan belongs to that group."

Hyun-woo finally explained everything that Global Exos told him. Alan had even anticipated this incident a few months ago and escape abroad.

"If the Hell River is unsealed then the damage to Nagaran would be huge. That is enough of a target for Alan. But judging by Alan's behaviour, his goal in unleashing the Hell River has to do with the Demonic War. That is why he mobilized 100,000 monsters despite Silrinad being surrounded."

"He even went abroad to escape being caught?"

"Then what is he after?"

"He escaped now but what will happen if he returns home later?"

"These guys probably have a lot of things planned. If they succeed then it won't be a problem returning home in the future."

Jjak-tung crossed his arms with a serious expression and muttered. Then one of the rehabilitation members hit the table and said.

"What do you think would happen if Alan wins the Demonic War?"

"What? Global Exos would be screwed."

The answer was a no-brainer.

"They'll be screwed?"

"Yes and Alan will be able to avoid any problems....."

The rehabilitation member flinched and closed his mouth. Then Jjak-tung smiled and laughed.

"That's right. Like Hyun-woo said, currently there is no way for Global Exos to stop Alan's movements. So they had no control over his actions. That is why Alan and the demonic monsters can move freely to try and swallow up New World. In other words, Alan could use the demons to take control of a city and act as the city guards in New World.

.....He could become the absolute dictator of New World!

"He's trying to make a situation where users can't play the game. And there is no way for the publisher to stop them. So there is only one option if the publisher wanted to maintain New World."

"We have to stop Alan!"

"That's right."

Jjak-tung tapped his fingers and replied. The atmosphere became quiet. Hyun-woo, Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members thought about the situation. If the demons conquered New World then the users on the continent could be wiped out anytime. If that situation repeated many times then they users would obviously become

dissatisfied and complain to Global Exos. They would also receive various lawsuits. There was only one way for Global Exos to stop that. It was to stop Alan from conquering New World. And they spent a considerable amount of money for that goal.

"I heard that New World accounts for 30% of Global Exos sales. Can you imagine? The annual profit of 30% of a big business would be in the thousands of billions. If a problem happened to New World then Global Exos might collapse. Billions of won was also invested in operating New World. That's not all. Global Exos' stocks would also be affected if something happened to New World.

"Stocks?"

"Yes, when the Demonic War started and users protested then the stocks related to New World plunged. After they announced that the war was a scheduled event, the stock price eventually returned to normal."

That's right. It was why Ha Myung-woo invested 10 billion won on the event. Compared to the plunging stock prices, 10 billion won was nothing.

"This is all the result of Alan's group. Then those guys probably have a way to gain money from it. They could buy the stocks when it plunged because of the demons. Then they could have the demons retreat and sell the stocks when the price rises. If they conquered New World then there are various methods to earn a profit. They could make tens of billions or even hundreds of billions in profit.

"Tens of billions, hundreds of billions.....!"

"Damn, we stabbed someone and only earned tens of millions of won a month. Meanwhile those guys can just sit back and watch the game while earning hundreds of billions of won?"

"A real villain is like this."

Jjak-tung muttered in a pessimistic voice. Anyway, Hyun-woo wasn't exactly astonished by Jjak-tung's words. He had already guessed the

general principles after hearing that Alan escaped overseas. It was natural. Alan was a clever criminal so he wouldn't do something reckless. He would be aware of the risks of becoming a criminal. If his plan succeeded then Global Exos wouldn't be able to punish Alan when he returned. If he failed he was a criminal, if he succeeded then he was a tycoon! Alan was risking his life on this gamble. Therefore Hyun-woo judged that Alan wouldn't make any disadvantageous choices in the Demonic War. The fact that he was concentrated on releasing the Hell River underneath Silvana instead of Silrinad meant that it was important.

'Well, I don't care whether Alan is scamming Global Exos. But.....'

The problem was that Hyun-woo would receive huge damage as a result. Alan had a deep grudge against Hyun-woo so if he conquered New World then Hyun-woo would have nowhere to run.

'I have to do whatever it takes to stop him'

After going round and round, he eventually ended up with his first conclusion. The rehabilitation members also came to the same conclusion and shouted.

"Now's not the time to be talking about this!"

"You have to let the Schudenberg expedition know so they can recapture Silvana!"

"I've already told them."

Hyun-woo murmured with a sigh. After Hyun-woo discovered Alan's plan, he had run from Shangri-La straight to Haverstein. And he immediately delivered the contents to Haverstein. But his response was different from what Hyun-woo expected. The Schudenberg and Bristania expeditions were still focused on the invasion of Silrinad.

"What are you saying.....?"

The rehabilitation members stuttered at Hyun-woo's words.

“No way! They don’t care if Nagaran disappears?”

“They said it was unrelated.”

“What?”

Hyun-woo sighed painfully and recalled his conversation with Haverstein.

“What on earth? Do you not believe my information?”

“Even if your information is certain, it doesn’t change anything.”

“Why.....?”

“That’s because the location is Nagaran.”

Haverstein replied with a heavy look. That’s right. It was the reason the Schudenberg Kingdom didn’t seriously consider Hyun-woo’s words. Originally Nagaran was an area that the Three Kingdoms fought over. But the Three Kingdoms became tired of the endless competition and called for a ceasefire before agreeing to give the buffer zone to the foreigners. In other words, it was an area not owned by any of the kingdoms. The foreigners who became the Lord of the territory had to pay taxed but it was split between three countries so the money wasn’t that much. There was no reason for them to stop the invasion.

On the other hand, the Sinus Principality was definitely money. That’s why the Schudenberg and Bristania kingdoms embarked on an expedition to take it back before it was destroyed by the demons. They could receive enormous compensation from the Sinus Principality. No, in some cases the marching army might even be able to increase the land of their respective kingdoms. It was why both kingdoms poured an absurd amount of money into the expeditions.

“That’s why I’ve been told to keep on marching. What would happen if the Schudenberg expedition suddenly exited after joining up with the Bristania expedition? We’ve only just managed to take the initiative in leading the expeditions in the Sinus Principality. Even if the

Schudenberg expedition reclaims Nagaran, it isn't a land that Schudenberg can insist ownership of. We would end up losing more than we've gained."

"But if the Hell River is unsealed then it won't just be Nagaran that is submerged. According to the records, it has the power to strengthen the demons and their magic....."

"Have you forgotten?"

Haverstein interrupted the conversation and looked at him.

"The Schudenberg expedition has the Ark of Creation."

Hyun-woo's body instantly stiffened. That's it. The Ark of Creation which was able to get rid of the 'Sphere of Influence!' If the Schudenberg Kingdom had that then they didn't need to fear the threat of the demonic influence anymore. No, if the demons became stronger and the Schudenberg Kingdom had the Ark of Creation then Schudenberg Kingdom could exert an influence on the entire continent. Therefore the Schudenberg expedition just dismissed Hyun-woo's report. In the long run, Hyun-woo finding the treasure had become a burden to him. However he still couldn't give up.

"But Alan knows we have the Ark of Creation. Yet his purpose is still to unseal the Hell River. That means even the Ark of Creation can't prevent it."

"Is there anything which proves that?"

"T-that....."

Hyun-woo was speechless from Haverstein's question. That's right. It was just Hyun-woo's guess. Hyun-woo couldn't answer Haverstein so he just sighed and shook his head.

".....I'm sorry.

The rehabilitation members instantly became angry when Hyun-woo explained.

“Is there nothing we can do?”

“Then contact Lariette and tell her to leave with the Ark of Creation!”

One rehabilitation member clamoured with an angry voice. Hyun-woo shook his head. Hyun-woo had also thought about that at first. However, the aristocrats of the Schudenberg Kingdom wouldn't be so lenient. After the Ark of Creation was used the first time, the soldiers thought of Lariette as a goddess and protected her. Even Hyun-woo had to go through several checks in the game before he could meet with Lariette.

‘Although I say that Lariette was protected.....’

It wasn't that simple. To be exact, it wasn't ‘protection’ but ‘surveillance.’ The Schudenberg nobles knew about the power of the Ark of Creation through Haverstein's report and kept a close eye on Lariette and the prophets.

“High ranking people are the same whether it is reality or the game.”

“So? What about Lariette? Even if the NPCs are watching, isn't Lariette a user? If she is threatened then can't she just end the connection?”

“I've also thought about that.....”

Ark sighed and shook his head. Hyun-woo had also thought about threatening the Schudenberg Kingdom like that. However, the situation wasn't that simple. The Ark of Creation was a key item in the Demonic War. And it wasn't just the expedition who was interested in the treasure. Global Exos wanted the Demonic War to end and were also looking at the Ark of Creation eagerly. And Lariette was one of Global Exos' candidates. So Lariette had already provided information about the Ark of Creation and Global Exos had negotiated with her. Lariette had accepted the conditions and now she didn't go to work but just concentrated on the game and using the Ark of Creation. There was no

way Hyun-woo could convince her to use it for his benefit. Although her existence did help his cause.

‘It is thanks to Lariette-nim that Schudenberg promised some military supplies.....’

Hyun-woo had been despondently leaving headquarters. Then he heard from behind him.

“Wait a minute!”

10 people escorting Lariette was approaching headquarters. And she said with a resolute expression.

“I heard the general outline of the situation. I understand the position of Schudenberg Kingdom. But isn’t Nagaran a territory that offers the Schudenberg Kingdom some taxes? The ones making the decision might think it has nothing to do with their kingdom but that’s not exactly true. In addition, Ark was the one who played a crucial role in finding the Ark of Creation. It is because of Ark-nim that I am able to use the Ark of Creation for Schudenberg’s benefit.”

Hyun-woo was aware of Lariette’s arrangement with Global Exos. However the NPCs couldn’t understand those circumstances. They knew the importance of the Ark of Creation so they couldn’t ignore the light threat in her words. Furthermore, the commander of the expedition force was Hyun-woo’s friend. Haverstein inflated Lariette’s threat by 200 times.

“Therefore the Schudenberg Kingdom should supply all the munitions he requires to retake Nagaran.”

This was the condition she proposed to the Schudenberg Kingdom. Lariette withdrew once more after making the strong request. The rehabilitation members nodded as they were told this.

“Huhuhu, as expected from Lariette. She is normally careful in her conduct but also has strength.”

The rehabilitation members looked at Hyun-woo. Hyun-woo knew that Lariette had done that for him. And he felt gratitude as well as a mysterious emotion when she appeared. After discovering that Lariette didn't have a relationship with Alan at Pabiun Canyon, he had been feeling that emotion more often. But now wasn't the time to consider it.

"The thing we need most is troops."

Hyun-woo sighed and muttered. That's right. Right now troops were absolutely necessary. If he didn't have any combat troops then what was the point of military supplies? The rehabilitation realized the situation and once again complained.

"There's no time to complain."

Jjak-tung spoke with a serious expression.

"If the Schudenberg kingdom won't help then Bristania will be the same. There is no need to even mention the Sinius Principality. In the end we can't receive help from the NPCs."

There was a heavy silence around the table. That's right. There were several issues but this was the biggest problem. They would have to regain Silvana overrun with 100,000 demons without any troops. It was for that reason that Hyun-woo gathered Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members. But Gwon Hwa-rang and the rehabilitation members couldn't think of a way. Hyun-woo scratched his head and asked.

"Is there any way to gather troops?"

"Let's see..... Even if we reduce the number of troops in the supply unit, that is still only 1,000 people. If we pull out more soldiers then there might be a problem with the supply of munitions."

"Then we've secured 1,000 people. Is there any other ways?"

"Even if we gather the users in Seutandal.....most users are already in the expedition force and other users aren't connecting at all because they

can't hunt or trade.....even if the Baran warriors are included, that is at most 3,000 or 4,000 people?"

Gwon Hwa-rang murmured but Jjak-tung shook his head.

"Seutandal won't get there quickly enough. Isn't that right?"

"Yes."

Hyun-woo answered absent-mindedly. Jjak-tung clicked his tongue and said.

"Silvana is already occupied by the demons so there isn't a lot of time."

That's right. It had already been three days since Silvana was occupied by the demons. Alan was after the Hell River on the lowest floor of Silvana's secret dungeon. While it had taken Hyun-woo 18 days to reach the lowest floor of the dungeon, it wouldn't take Alan that much time. Hyun-woo had the Dark Eden members train in the secret dungeon so a lot of monsters had already been cleared.

'Alan also rallied 100,000 demonic monsters to attack Silvana. If they arrange some for defending Radon and Beiku, then he probably has 10,000 monsters with him.'

In the end, Alan probably only entered the dungeon with 10,000 demons.

"Will it take a few days?"

"Presently Dark Eden is hunting on the 58th and 59th floors. The 50th floor is where there is an ancient maze while the 51st floor is the Abyss so the terrain becomes more complicated and there are a lot of traps."

This was one of the reasons why Seutandal won't work. It would take 4~5 days to move troops from Seutandal to Nagaran. Alan had already entered the secret dungeon for three days so it would be over by the time they arrived. And 3,000~4,000 troops wouldn't be enough.

"In the end, we have to gather troops that can make it to Nagaran in one or two days."

The rehabilitation members fell silent at Jjak-tung's words. Nagaran wasn't under the demonic sphere of influence yet. There were 100,000 monsters so at least 50,000 troops were necessary. If there was a time limit then users waiting for the resurrection time to be over wouldn't be able to join. When considering that point 50,000 was the minimum. They needed 50,000 troops from areas adjacent to Nagaran. It was an almost impossible task.

Hyun-woo and the rehabilitation members sighed as time passed. Yapsab noticed the heavy atmosphere and stealthily headed towards the living room. All the rehabilitation members turned their heads as the TV turned on. Hyun-woo also looked at the TV without thinking.

"Damn, if we were celebrities then it would be possible....."

Yapsab smacked his lips and muttered as he looked at the TV. Yapsab was watching a guerrilla concert that was being broadcasted. The concert was being held by an amateur singer who had gathered an audience through various promotions. The TV was broadcasting the concert where 10,000 people were gathered to watch the new singer.

"If we were celebrities then gathering people won't be a problem."

"Yeah....."

Hyun-woo who was watching the TV sighed and answered. Then an intense spark occurred in his head.

'Celebrity? TV? People?'

Those three words entwined together and formed an idea. Hyun-woo jumped up and shouted.

"There might be a way!"

Act 6: Grab Hold of the Enemy

-Kuraka, kuraka, beldram!

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa, ku kwa kwa kwa kwa!

A huge number of demonic monsters were shrieking while running. The number of demons running while causing a dust cloud numbered in the tens of thousands! Armed with swords and spears, the Tallons riding ugly horses were leading them. There were so many different types of monsters roaring that it could fill a museum. The number of demons was enough to step on a city! Anyone facing those many demons would shudder with fear.....

“Bah!”

But Ark just snorted as he laughed. Then he spoke to JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members on either side of him.

“Hyung-nims, it’s begun!”

“Archer units, aim at the monsters in the lead!”

The rehabilitation members on either side of him simultaneously shouted. Then a huge dark cloud appeared in the sky behind Ark. The huge dark cloud.....

That’s right. It was tens of thousands of arrows. It flew into the sky like a dark cloud before falling like a shower of rain.

Syu syu syu syuk, syu syu syu syuk!

The tens of thousands of arrows fell over the heads of the demons. The Tallons in the lead fell to the ground like a hedgehog and were trampled to pieces by the charging demons. It was hundreds of them. But it didn’t feel like the number of demons had even decreased.

-Kuraka, kuraka, beldram!

When their colleagues fell down, the demons just shrieked and ran forward even more.

“JusticeMan ajusshi!”

“Okay. Shield units, prepare for a collision!”

JusticeMan lifted his left arm and shouted. Thousands of warriors behind Ark raised their shield. They advanced 10 metres, placed one knee on the ground and raised their shields vertically. It was a shield barriers made of thousands of warriors.

“Spear units should stand behind the shield units to prevent their attacks!”

This time JusticeMan raised his right arm. The spear units got into position and positioned their spears diagonally. The spears were raised at a 30 degree angle above the shields. In moments a wall made of shields and spears were built. It was the ultimate defense position to prevent a charge. It was the formation he thought of when fighting monsters in the secret dungeon.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

A roaring sound shook the space. The demons hadn't reduced their speed and collided with the spears and shields. The shields were firmly anchored and they prevented the assault while the spears pushed through the gaps in the demons' leather. Ark's eyes shone at the sight.

“Now. Go forward, every unit intercept the demons!”

“Waaaaahhhhh!”

Like an enormous dam had discharged, the protective barrier split to the left and right. And thousands of soldiers ran through the gap in the protective barrier. The infantry tangled with the demons and a fierce battle began.

‘I didn't think I would gather this much!’

Ark looked at the fighting soldiers with a warm look. They were tens of thousands of soldiers with remarkable armour and weapons! They were

all the users that Ark had collected in a mere day. They numbered 60,000!

.....How had Ark managed to gather that many users in just one day? Ark found the method after Yapsab turned on the TV yesterday evening. The TV had been broadcasting a guerrilla concert. An amateur singer had managed to attract 10,000 people for a concert. Ark looked at the broadcast and considered.

‘The singer gathered that many people just from PR?’

The singer was excellent but it was because of the power of the TV that people gathered. They were interested in appearing on TV and showed up. No matter if it was Korea or the world, the influence of television was enormous.

‘Why didn’t I think of it before?’

Ark thought about the game exclusive news. Ark had used the broadcast to influence users to protect Lancel village. But he couldn’t use such methods this time. These days the biggest topic on the game exclusive news was the Demonic War. So the videos of the Schudenberg and Bristania expeditions were being played every day. In such a situation, appearing on TV wouldn’t garner a lot of attention.

‘However, if it is associated with the war then that will change.’

“I have a scoop related to New World. Can you broadcast it right now?”

“If it is Ark-nim’s scoop then we will broadcast it anytime!”

Ark was guaranteed to increase the ratings so the game exclusive news immediately accepted. Ark sent a video he took a few hours ago and it was broadcasted on TV. The video showed Ark entering the History Crystal in Shangri-La and finding the secret about the Hell River. After the video ended, the host continued talking.

“It is clear that there are other secrets entangled with the Demonic War. The demons are plotting to unseal the Hell River hidden underneath

Silvana and flood all of Nagaran. Yet the Schudenberg and Bristania kingdoms are taking no action.”

The host spoke with an excited voice.

“On Dark Wolf-nim who is supported by our game exclusive news is trying to smash the demons conspiracy on his own. But no matter how strong Dark Wolf-nim is, it is impossible for him to defeat 100,000 monsters by himself. So Dark Wolf-nim is recruiting heroes to crush the conspiracy of the demons! If you visit the game exclusive news’ homepage then you can find out more details!”

The impact of this broadcast was enormous. Tens of thousands of people instantly connected to the website as soon as the broadcast ended. And several users left commands on the special bulletin board that Ark requested.

-I am Aramis, the Lord of Radon. I asked for help as soon as the demons invaded but both Bristania and Schudenberg refused. If Dark Wolf is moving than the 4,800 people of the Aramis alliance will join him.

-I am the Lord of Beiku, Saruman. You should know my position so I won’t write a lot. Those of the Golden Cross alliance will join with Dark Wolf-nim!

-I am Pejito, the Lord of Granada. If Dark Wolf-nim’s information is correct and the Hell River will flood all of Nagaran then it isn’t just the problem of one territory. The 4,900 members of our Union alliance will fight with Dark Wolf-nim.....

This was what Ark had aimed for. That’s right. If the Hell River flooded then various problems would form, but the ones most affected would be the various local lords and their alliances. When removing the direction connection with Alan, their circumstances were similar to Ark’s.

‘What will happen if they know the situation in Nagaran?’

Of course they would try every method to stop it like Ark. And Dark Wolf was already a name known throughout New World. If Ark appealed to them directly then the lords and their alliances wouldn’t

hesitate to help! The results were exactly what Ark expected. After the broadcast was viewed, the lords of each territory rushed like wild boars to apply. There were quite a few alliance members in the expedition but their territory was at stake so they flew to Nagaran without questioning it. Users spread all over the continent used the Letter Movement to move among cities and ran to Nagaran. In just two days of game time, the alliances of the 12 territories had assembled in Nagaran.

“The assembly of the 4,800 Aramis alliance members from Radon territory is complete!”

“The assembly of the 5,200 Golden Cross alliance members from Beiku is complete!”

“The assembly of the 4,900 Union alliance members from Gurana is complete.....”

The final number was 60,000 people! It was the birth of 60,000 allied forces consisting entirely of users that had never occurred before in New World’s history.

“Don’t back off! If you retreat then your territory will be lost!”

“Kill as much monsters as you can before you die!”

The biggest advantage of this alliance was that they weren’t afraid to go through fire or water. Who cared about death if their territory would be lost if the Hell River flooded? It was the same for the 1,000 Dark Eden members led by JusticeMan and the rehabilitation group. They received an income from the triangular trade and the munitions supply so if they lost the territory then their income would fly away. They became resolute in following Ark to defend Silvana. But JusticeMan’s case was slightly different.

“Dammit! It just had to happen now!”

JusticeMan yelled as he knocked down some demons to the ground. He was angry because they had interfered in his proposal to Park So-mi.

Of course, Ark wasn't just leisurely watching the situation.

"Okay, shall I go too? Summon Demon. Racard, Purital, Shambala!"

".....Do you want to die?"

Shambala glared threateningly as he was summoned (?). But Ark just ignored it and gave his summons (?) and order.

"Racard, watch the military situation using satellite surveillance mode!"

"Yes!"

Purital, Clad Armour!"

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack!

Purital was taken apart like a robot transformation and incorporated himself around Ark's body. Racard's voice was heard in his ear at the same time.

"Master, the Dark Loaders are moving on the left side while being escorted by Heavy Walkers."

"Over there?"

Ark's eyes looked at the demons through the bone armour and he ran lightly across the area. The demons wearing black robes surrounded by armoured Heavy Walkers caught his eye. In fact, even Ark wasn't able to do that much in a situation where thousands of soldiers and users were fighting. If he killed 10 monsters among the 10,000 then it was just like a ratio of 1000:1. That type of number wouldn't have a huge influence on the military situation. But there was a way for one person to have an influence on the military situation. It was to intercept enemies with special abilities! If he took out demons with wide area abilities or healing magic then it would reduce the burden. The Dark Loaders were demons who could restore health like priests. Ark focused on them and shouted.

"Hook Explosion!"

The hooks at Ark's shoulder and knees crossed the space. It grabbed the bodies of two Dark Loaders and pulled them to Ark.

"Shambala, now!"

"Can you stop ordering me around?"

Ark drove his sword into one of the monster's chest. Thanks to the damage from Hook Explosion and Ark's attack, the Dark Loader stumbled and its spell was cancelled. Then Shambala shot forward like an arrow and drove his dagger into the neck of a Dark Loader. There was an eerie sound and the Dark Loader's neck was cut. It was a perfect critical hit to the neck of an enemy made defenseless by his partner. Ark and Shambala finished up the Dark Loaders and cruised the battlefield for more enemies. Therefore the allied forces could minimize any unnecessary consumption of supplies and ran down the demons.

"Knock down the demons no matter what!"

"Archers aim for the legs of any that are escaping!"

"Destroy the black obelisks!"

The voices of the allied forces shouted from among the monsters. After a while, there was the sound of a horse's hooves and one of the allied members attacking a monster collapsed. Each of the leaders expressed their confusion at the same time.

"Dullahan!"

"The Dullahan Knights are coming!"

Around 100 knights had appeared and were trampling the allied members. The knights had exposed bones through various areas of their black armour. They were also holding their heads in their left hand. Holding a sword in the right hand and blowing flames from the mouth of the head being held in the left hand, it was the knight called Dullahan.

“Kukukuku, show these ignorant humans the power of the darkness! Become a dead person in hell!”

The Dullahan shouted while blowing hell flames. When the high ranking demons appeared, the defense line of the allied forces suddenly collapsed.

“JusticeMan ajusshi, rehabilitation hyungnims!”

“Understood. The Pejito and Gurana troops, move to the right side!”

“Golden Cross troops, rotate in a semicircle to the left!”

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members shouted towards the surrounding allied forces. Then the allied forces fighting split to the left and right.

“Magicians, connect your magic using Willpower Exchange!”

The magicians simultaneously started chanting spells. The intense light covered the bodies of the magicians like a net. It was the spell which connected magic to make higher ranking magic available.

“Light of the world which swallows the darkness.....anger of the Thunder God!”

Bang, bang, bang, bang!

At the same time, hundreds of stems of lighting struck from the ground. It was a dominant wide area magic with attacked the targets within 8 circles! The magicians were completely exhausted afterwards but the Dullahan were vaporized by the thousands of hundreds of strikes and were on the verge of death.

“Smash their heads!”

The thousands of allied forces simultaneously attacked at Ark’s command. Thanks to the magicians’ 8 circles, the Dullahan were unable to resist. Several hundred spears penetrated its body while hundreds of swords and maces slammed down on the Dullahans’ heads.

“The Dullahan Knights have been exterminated!”

“Run and destroy the black obelisks!”

The allied forces had their morale increased from killing the Dullahans and instantly charged the other demons. This time 30,000 demons were in front of the allied forces. The allied forces number 60,000 troops. The momentum was with the allied forces thanks to the wide area magic and they crushed the demons. Several hours later, the allied forces swallowed the demons like a huge wave and advanced. After a while, the demons received enormous damage and were forced to retreat.

“We’ve regained Beiku territory!”

“Let’s advance to Silvana!”

“Ohhhhhh!”

The tens of thousands of soldiers stood on the piled up dead bodies of the demons and cheered with their weapons raised.

“Damn!”

A curse automatically emerged from Ark’s mouth. Ark was standing on the hill looking down at Silvana. But the sight that caught his eyes was different from the Silvana he remembered. The wide farmland was pitted with holes like bombs had exploded and the villages were ruins.

‘The estate which I raised.....’

Ark grinded his teeth together. After obtaining Silvana from the Hermes alliance, he had used the secret funds from the Continental Commerce Firm to develop the territory. Thanks to his efforts, a B rank promotion had been just around the corner. But the demons had stepped all over his territory.

The B rank promotion was set aside and it had fallen to D rank.

He had already known this but the sight made anger well up inside him. Ark took a deep breath and pushed it down.

‘Calm down. Now isn’t the time to be thinking about that.’

That’s right. If didn’t matter if it was a B or D rank territory if he couldn’t protect Silvana. Silvana would disappear if the Hell River flooded.

“.....This can’t continue.”

Ark muttered as he looked down at the territory. After forming the allied forces, they had instantly retaken Beiku and Radon. They were then able to advance into Silvana. It was a series of consecutive victories for Nagaran’s allied forces! On the other hand, the demons had received successive defeats and retreated to Silvana. Even so, it wasn’t possible to say that the present situation was good. The reason was the existence of the black obelisks. 80% of the black obelisks that fell in Nagaran were concentrated on Silvana castle and the surrounding areas. The demons that occupied Radon and Beiku also moved back to join those at Silvana. While regaining Beiku and Radon, they had killed a large number of demons but only destroyed 20% of the obelisks. In other words, the number of demons had only decreased by 20%. The other demons would be restored by the black obelisks around Silvana. Therefore, there were 70,000~80,000 demons left as a last line of defense around Silvana. This was also the number that could be resurrected in the future. However, the allied forces were also able to resurrect at well.

‘With the power of Nagaran’s allied forces, it is possible to exterminate the demons over the next few days and regain the territory.’

That’s right. Nagaran’s allied forces currently had 60,000 people! They weren’t ordinary NPCs and users. They were the alliances that had fought in New World’s largest battlefields and won the territories. Personal combat power, organizational abilities, experience and equipment.....it wasn’t an exaggeration to say they were all experts of the highest level. There were 60,000 of those experts. Killing

70,000~80,000 demons should be no problem for them. The allied forces were already on schedule to retake Silvana. But Ark's biggest worry wasn't this battle's victory or defeat.

'The problem is time!'

After Ark used the TV to gather the allied forces, they finally reached Silvana three days later. Forming the allied forces took 2 days while it took a week to capture Beiku and Radon and advance to Silvana.

'That means one week has passed since Alan entered the secret dungeon.'

That's right. Ark's problem wasn't retaking Silvana. Even if they retook Silvana, if they couldn't stop Alan then Nagaran would be flooded with the Hell River. If he couldn't stop Alan before he arrived at the Hell River then everything would end. So while the allied forces were marching towards Silvana, Ark had ordered the Dark Eden members hiding in the secret dungeon to monitor Alan's movements. And just now.....

-I've spotted Alan's group.

A Dark Eden member hiding in the secret dungeon whispered. The place the coalition member was watching was the entrance to the Abyss on the 51st floor. Alan, the Avenger guild and 10,000 demons had entered the Abyss. Ark thought about the situation after hearing the report.

'The Abyss is different from the 50 floors before it. It is the size of a huge maze and was just as complicated. Unimaginable traps are laid out everywhere like spider webs. No matter how many troops there are, it won't be easy for them to penetrate the Abyss.'

Ark remembered his experiences in the Abyss. But at that time monsters were swarming the dungeon. On the other hand, the monsters in the secret dungeon were reduced after Dark Eden's training and wouldn't revive for a few days. While there were monsters in the previous 50 floors, there weren't any in the Abyss yet.

‘If Alan doesn’t have to worry about the disruption from monsters then he can pass in 2~3 days.’

In other words, Ark only had 2~3 days left! Of course it was possible for Nagaran’s allied forces to recapture Silvana in 2~3 days. But the problem was they would have to go down from the 1st floor of the secret dungeon after recapturing Silvana. Alan had already passed the 50th floor. Even if they didn’t sleep and ran with full speed forward, there was no guarantee that Ark could catch up with Alan. Silvana also hadn’t even been regained yet. Alan would reach the 60th floor by the time Ark regained Silvana! Silvana would be flooded with the Hell River.

“.....I have no choice but to use that method.”

Ark returned to the camp and muttered. Ark had expected a situation like this in the first place.

‘Alan had already entered the secret dungeon by the time I learnt about Silvana’s occupation. No matter how fast I regain Silvana, won’t I still be too late to stop Alan?’

Ark had some expectations from the elite monsters in the secret dungeon. The experienced Dark Eden now only hunted in the Abyss. So the 50 floors before that were left alone with a lot of monsters.

‘Alan’s group would have to clear them while going down. Hopefully it will take them a few days and we can catch up.’

But Alan was entering the Abyss with the Avenger guild and 10,000 monsters. The monsters in the ancient maze wouldn’t be able to stop those many troops. And Alan had already entered the Abyss.

“I thought you were elite monsters? You’re all just boring monsters!”

Ark cursed the elite monsters in the secret dungeon. But Ark wasn’t naive enough to believe that the monsters could stop them. He was able to predict this and made some preparations.

Ttukttuk, ttukttuk, ttukttuk!

Ark heard some hammer sounds as he entered the camp of the allied forces. He turned his head and saw a huge device among the tents. It was an odd machine with old TVs and antennas placed here and there. And 1 balloon like user was busily going around with various tools, tightening screws and hammering in nails.

“Are you there yet?”

“Phew.....what? Ah, it’s you?”

The balloon like user wiped the sweat and raised his eyes as Ark approached. The user covered with oil spots was Wormer. Wormer tapped the big machine and laughed.

“It’s almost done. I need to finish increasing the stability.”

“What about the performance?”

“Don’t worry about it. The performance will fall a little bit with the stability but it will still work. Because this is the work of the genius inventor Wormer. If you doubt me then you can test it out. The functional parts have been built so you can check it.”

Ark put his hands on the machine after hearing Ark’s words. Then the information about the machine rose in front of him.

-Quantum Material Transmission Device

Type: 1st grade invention

Design and Production: Wormer

A machine that converts a person or object to quantum material and transmits it to another place. However, a receiver is required in order for the machine to return the person or object to their original form. The magic necessary for the quantum transmission is proportional to the volume of the target and the distance between the transmission machine and the receiver. If the volume is big or the transmission distance is far then it will consume more magic energy.

That's right. This machine was one of the precautions Ark thought of. The Quantum Material Transmission Device! It was a mobile device that could move a person anywhere! While Ark, Shambala and JusticeMan were arguing about a way to enter the secret dungeon, Wormer had explained about the machine. When Ark heard the explanation of the machine, he instantly supplied Wormer with the materials and commissioned him to produce it.

"How is it? Are you positive about the performance?"

Wormer asked Ark with an elated expression after the information was confirmed. Then he muttered with vexation.

"But I'm dissatisfied with some parts since I had to create it in a hurry. The design..... Damn, the quantum machine I left in the underground base had a better performance and design....."

This wasn't the first time Wormer had made a Quantum Material Transmission Device. He had made one with better energy efficiency and reliability and placed it in the underground base. However, Wormer's underground base had been used to trap Alan and the demons. When they had visited the underground base after Pabium Fortress was captured, they discovered that all the inventions were shattered. This was why the hermit like Wormer was helping in the war.

"That bastard Alan, he dared to turn my inventions that are artwork into scrap iron? I'll make you experience how terrible these items are with your own body!"

Wormer trembled as he thought about it again. Then he suddenly remembered something and asked Ark.

"But is it really okay? Like I said, this quantum device is like junk compared to my other one. But it still requires the receiver to be used. The receiver is easy to use but don't you want to move to the secret dungeon?"

That's right. The quantum machine couldn't be used yet even if it was finished. The Quantum Material Transmission Device couldn't be used

to transfer people anywhere they wanted. Just like the Letter Movement built by the Magic Institute, the quantum machine was paired with a receiver. And Ark wanted to use the quantum machine to move to the 60th floor of the secret dungeon.

‘That is the only way to stop Alan in the present situation.’

This was a situation where there was no way to catch up with Alan even if he quickly captured Silvana. So Ark wanted to use the quantum machine to move directly to the 60th floor where the Dark Eden members were hiding and join with them to catch Alan’s ankle. It was a way to stop Alan while the allied forces regained Silvana!

‘If I block Alan then it will be easy for Nagaran’s allied forces to catch up. Stepping on Alan and the 10,000 demons won’t be a problem.’

But in order to use the quantum machine to move to the 60th floor, he needed to install the receiver onto the 60th floor. It was the situation where he had to install the receiver on the 60th floor in order to go to the 60th floor! It was the reason why the quantum machine couldn’t be used when they were hiding in Wormer’s underground base.

‘But there is a way!’

“Is the receiver easy to make?”

Ark asked after a short time. Wormer nodded and replied.

“How many times have I said it? Anyway can create the device if they have my genius design.”

“Good. Please finish everything and prepare to use it at any time.”

Ark smiled and headed towards the garrison JusticeMan, the rehabilitation members and the 60,000 members of Nagaran’s allied forces were gathered. They all looked at Ark and he began to talk.

"There is no more time for resting. I know that you're exhausted and suffered a lot but it is all for the sake of protecting Nagaran. Our goal is to crush the ambitions of the demons so please exert yourself a bit more."

"Don't worry. Our alliance members are prepared to fight at any time!"

"Yes. Staying up a few nights is no problem if it is to protect Nagaran!"

The alliance leaders spoke in an expression filled with determination. They would receive a huge monetary loss if Nagaran disappeared so there was no room to consider other matters. Ark looked at them and nodded.

"Okay. Everything is right before our eyes. There are a lot of them and the demons occupying Silvana are strong. The battles would become fiercer than before but there is no doubt that we can crush these guys!"

Ark pulled out his sword and indicated Silvana.

"Now, advance!"

"Waaaaahhhhh!"

At Ark's command, the 60,000 users shouted in unison and rushed towards Silvana. Nagaran's allied forces ran down the hill and towards the demons gathered around Silvana. There were shouts and shrieks as thousands of feet shook the earth. After a while.....

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, pepepepeng!

It was a conflict between more than 100,000 humans and demons. The allies wielding shields and swords tackled the demons. But the swell enveloped the resisting demons and they were torn to pieces. The maces broke the heads of the demons and the swords cut off body pieces. It was a hellish scene where thousands of lives were lost and the ground was filled with pools of blood. The allied forces had an average level of 350. On the other hand, the demons had an average level of 400. But the allied forces were equipped with rare equipment and special skills. It was the reason for their victory when capturing Radon and

Beiku. However, the demons that were Silvana's last line of defense weren't insignificant.

-Nadan, nadan, baramud, nadan.....kuranosu!

An spell suddenly came from behind the demons. Huge black flames swept all over the place and hundreds of allies were turned to grey powder. Dozens of huge demons appeared through a gap. At the same time, red warning messages flashed before the eyes of the allied forces.

-The boss monster, Hell Lion 'Soul Crusher' has appeared.

-The boss monster, Creature of Despair 'Gorgon' has appeared.

-The elite boss monster, King of Despair 'Moraid' has appeared.....

They were dozens of bosses and elite bosses between level 500~600! When they appeared, several units were instantly wiped out.

"Magicians and archers to the rear concentrate on support fire!"

"Don't attack without reason! Use your battle formation to confront them!"

"Priests focus on restoring the troops fighting the bosses first!"

The unit commanders ran back and forth while shouting. Thanks to the appearance of the demonic bosses, the war became even more confusing. But Ark's eyes didn't look at the opposing bosses

"Now. Demonic Manifestations. Spear, spear, spear, mace and mace!"

This was the chance Ark aimed for as his eyes flashed and he shouted. The equipment chosen jumped out from his bag and appeared above the heads of the 1,000 Dark Eden members. The shape of a spear was formed and shattered before being absorbed into the soldiers' bodies.

-Demonic energy has been extracted from the offerings (Spear, spear, spear, mace and mace).

The effect exercised by this combination is <Power Charge>.

Power Charge: The users will gain the effect of 'Power Charge' for 10 minutes. However, this effect only applies to the enemy in front. When Power Charge is in effect, assault speed will increase by 50% and there is a chance of pushing the opponent back 5 metres.

However, this effect only applies to the enemy in front.

"Dark Eden, avoid the bosses and charge the demons on the left!"

"Ohhhh, everybody charge!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Thanks to the effect of Power Charge, the demons flew everywhere as the Dark Eden members rushed forward. Ark and Dark Eden approached the outskirts of Silvana castle. Then a bush with a small gap between the rocks caught his eye.

"That's it, Racard!"

Ark's eyes brightened as he spotted the rock gap and shouted. Then Racard who had been watching the battlefield using satellite surveillance mode flew towards Ark. Ark pulled out a scroll from the bag and said.

"Do I need to explain the situation again?"

"No, I understand. Master."

"Now the fate of Silvana depends on you and your wings."

"Y-you don't need to say it. Y-you will increase my burden."

Racard stuttered with a tense expression.

"Now go."

Racard grabbed the scroll and turned his body. Then Ark looked at Racard's trembling wings and hugged him.

"There is no need to be too tense. I know how hard you work to perform the missions. If this mission fails then it won't be your fault. I won't blame you. And.....if possible, please survive and return. Because you are the pet that I prize most."

"M-Master.....!"

Racard stuttered as he heard Ark's embarrassing words. Tears flowed from his eyes before he made a determined expression.

"I won't say goodbye!"

Racard answered and flew between the crack in the rock. This was the reason why Ark disregarded the military situation and sneaked to this place. No, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that this battle was all for allowing Racard to fly between the rock gap. The gap in the rocks contained the entrance to the secret tunnel into Silvana! Previously he had used the raccoons to make this secret tunnel into the dungeon. That's right. This was the method Ark came up with.

Even if he moved the troops through the secret tunnel, there was no way to catch up with Alan. If he sent a large amount of troops then of course the demons would notice the existence of the tunnel. But there was no worry about being discovered with just 1 bat. Racard also thoroughly knew the terrain of the secret dungeon so he could reach the 60th floor before Alan. Ark had given him Wormer's design before infiltrating the secret dungeon. The raccoons were down there so they could easily make the receiver.

"I believe in you!"

Ark saluted towards the rock that Racard disappeared into. Then Shambala next to him snorted and said.

"Are you just playing around?"

"No. Now, let's enter the battlefield again before the demons notice!"

Dark Eden attacked the demons at Ark's command and he stepped out of the bush. Now the fate of Nagaran hung on Racard's wings.

"I've found the stairs going down to the next floor!"

Magicians were scattered all over the place when one of them shouted. The magician wearing a black robe.....

He was the main magician of the Hermes alliance, Jewel. But after his attack on Lancel and Ark failed, he had become trapped in Jackson's underground prison. Then Hermes' leader Raiden banished Jewel and he became like dog food. At that moment, Andel visited in order to recruit Jewel into the Avenger guild. That's right. Jewel was currently in the Avenger guild. Jewel reported to a knight wearing black armour.....

"Okay. Gather the scattered troops. We will head to the next floor as soon as they are assembled."

The person who gave the order was Alan. Jewel nodded and gazed at the other users.

"Yes! Communication soldiers, connect with each unit and tell them to join us."

10 people simultaneously used the Feather of Whispering. And they communicated Alan's order to their colleagues scattered around the dungeon.

-We've found the entrance. Bring the demons and return!

This was the reason Alan brought the Avenger guild into the secret dungeon. It was in order to control the demons! While Jewel was gathering the scattered troops, Alan looked around at the surroundings.

'The work is progressing as scheduled but something is strange.'

Alan had started to feel uneasy after entering the 51st floor and the Abyss. It was a secret dungeon with elite creatures. Alan led the Avenger guild and the 10,000 demons in order to capture it as quickly as possible. But the circumstances were different from what Alan expected after he entered. The first 10 floors were similar to what he remembered but afterwards it felt like the number of monsters had reduced. Usually there were more monsters the deeper they entered the dungeon. Yet this phenomenon worsened after he came down to the 51st floor where the Abyss was. It was difficult to see any monsters at all.

‘It’s become easier but.....’

Previously Alan had only reached the 4th floor of the secret dungeon when he occupied Silvana. It was the limit since Alan and his guild were around level 150 at the time. Even though Alan was the Lord of Silvana, he had little information about the secret dungeon. The terrain and the special abilities of the monsters were something he had never experienced. It was the reason why Alan entered the Abyss with 10,000 demons. When first arriving at the Abyss, Alan had faced the same situation as Ark. They received quite a bit of damage from the traps laid everywhere.

‘If there were monsters here then I would be delayed even more.’

Alan thought it was fortunate that there were no monsters in the Abyss. He never considered that this wasn’t the normal situation. So although Alan thought it was lucky, he still felt uncomfortable.

‘Well, I’ll find out eventually. I won’t be interrupted as long as Silvana is occupied by the demons!’

Alan smiled as he looked at the demons that were gathering. No matter the enemy, they had 10,000 users and demons. Nagaran would disappear from the map the moment Alan entered the bottom floor of the secret dungeon!

‘Huhuhu, I wonder what Ark will look like when he sees Nagaran submerged by the Hell River. But this is only the beginning. If I conquer New World then there will be nowhere for him.’

“Let’s go down to the next floor!”

Alan commanded and ran across the dungeon. At that moment, Jewel who had been using his magic to search for traps raised his head. He had seen a white object floating in the darkness.

“What the, that is? Second Sight!”

Jewel immediately used long distance viewing magic. And his face became confused as he determined the identity of the white object.

“A bat? Hik! W-wait? He is Ark’s summon! Alan-nim, Ark’s summon is here!”

That’s right. The white object near the ceiling was Racard. No, to be exact it was Racard with his back covered in a white glittering powder.

“What? Gargoyles, catch him!”

Dozens of gargoyles flew towards Racard.

“H-hik!”

Racard freaked out and started running away. Although Racard was no match for the gargoyles 1 on 1, thanks to Ark’s training he could easily escape from them. Dozens of gargoyles shot rays at him but Racard used acrobatic flight manoeuvres to avoid it. And he ran way to the stairs leading down to the next floor. No, he tried to run away.

“Timosi!”

“Okay! Matanyi Shooter no. 2, Devil Chasing Arrow!”

The Dark Elf behind Alan started shooting arrows. But the Dark Elf was more than 100 metres away from Racard!

“Bah, not a chance!”

Racard checked the direction of the arrow and snorted before changing directions. Yet the arrow followed Racard’s movements? That’s right. This was the Dark Elf’s special skill that gave even Shambala a hard time.

“Eek? What, what is this....kuek, kuek, kuek!”

In the end, Racard’s chubby belly was studded with three arrows. While he was stumbling, he became surrounded by 10 gargoyles. Racard was caught by the gargoyles.

“D-dammit! Ugh, my stomach.....”

“How did Ark’s pet get all the way here?”

Alan asked as he approached Racard. Then he spotted something that Racard was holding.

“This?”

Alan asked as he verifying the contents of the scroll. Racard just scratched his neck.

“What? Silvana is occupied by demons so you shouldn’t be able to enter even if Ark knows about the secret dungeon. But who are you trying to pass this scroll to?”

“D-damn! What are you saying after shooting my stomach with arrows! I am Ark’s pet! I won’t talk! I won’t talk even if I die! Get lost you loser! Chwe, chwe, chwe!”

As expected from the dirty Racard! He had daringly spat in Alan’s face.

“You.....!”

Alan took out his sword as his face became covered in saliva.

“Alan-nim, leave him to me.”

Alan flinched and turned his head as he heard an eerie voice. A huge figure wearing a hood approached Alan. A smile spread on Alan's face as he saw the figure.

"That's right. You're also here"

"Bah, don't make me laugh. I am a vampire. Everyone here is useless."

".....Is that right?"

The man giggled at Racard's words and pulled down his hood. Fear filled Racard's face.

"Dark Strike!"

Pepepepeng, pepepepeng!

Shining Darkness flashed and launched a series of chain explosions. It penetrated the demons gathered in a straight line and their health was reduced by 20%.

"Now. Destroy the black obelisk while they're delayed!"

The allied forces flocked to the obelisk while Ark struck and distracted the demons. After Racard had gone through the tunnel, Ark and Dark Eden had immediately re-joined the allied forces. And they've been battling the demons for almost a day. But they couldn't even approach Silvana thanks to the black obelisks. On the other hand, the allied forces were slowly destroying the black obelisks and the tide was turning in their favour.

'But the limit has already been reached.'

Ark surveyed his allies gasping for breath and sighed. The allied forces were users. They could leave to restore health and mana but the fatigue would continue piling up. Moreover, they had little rest while quickly

advancing to Silvana. No matter how much they wanted to keep their territories, their stamina was still limited.

‘They might be completely wiped out if this continues. We should retire and take a break.....’

Ark was thinking that when something interrupted him. A message window had appeared in front of Ark.

-Your connection with your summon Racard has been stopped!

‘What the? Did Alan catch Racard?’

The last method Ark devised had been blocked. But a small smile still spread on Ark’s face.

‘Huhuhu, it is proceeding!’

“All troops, concentrate on defense and retreat while maintaining battle formation!”

Pweeeet, pweeeet!

Ark commanded and the alliance leaders blew a whistle in unison. The allied forces swiftly retreated from the demons. There were also quite a few demons injured so they gave up chasing and returned to Silvana. Ark quickly gave some orders once they had retreated.

“Divide the troops into two. One half will be prepared for ambushes from the demons while the other half will get some sleep. The amount of time to sleep is 4 hours. We will gather and attack Silvana again in 8 hours. So far we’ve destroyed 1/3rd of the obelisks so we can win back Silvana in the next battle!”

“I understand. But.....”

One of the tired alliance leaders showed signs of insecurity.

“We need a break but is there enough time? We still have to catch up with the demons even if we capture Silvana.....”

“Just leave it to me.”

Ark replied with a grin.

-Boramae-nim has used a [Feather of Whispering] to whisper to you.

Boramae was the leader of the unit guarding the NPCs in the secret dungeon. Ark accepted the whisper and Boramae's voice rang in his ears.

-Ark-nim, Radun has arrived.

-The blueprint?

-It was received.

-How long will it take the raccoons to make?

-The device itself is simple so 1 hour. Radun had brought all the necessary materials and the raccoons have already started working.

-Get back to me as soon as it is completed.

-Understood.

‘It's a success!’

Ark clenched his fist as the whisper ended. That's right. This was the reason Ark had panicked when he received the disconnection message. From the beginning this plan wasn't based on Racard. Wormer's design wasn't complicated but the raccoons still couldn't make it. Special materials were needed to create the receiver. So Ark had left it up to Radun to carry the items. But a problem had occurred in the execution stage.

‘Alan is accompanied by 10,000 monsters. There are also 1,000 users. Despite Radun's Protective Colouration skill, there is no guarantee he will go unnoticed. And if he gets caught.....’

The operation would be unsuccessful and Hell River would flood.

‘.....What if Alan’s attention is drawn elsewhere?’

The real thing was Radun. And Racard was the bait! That’s right. Ark was the one who coated Racard’s back with the shiny powder. He had stealthily done it when embracing Racard at the rocks. Thanks to that glitter, Racard drew Alan’s eyes and Radun successfully reached the 60th floor.

“Devilish child!”

Shambala muttered as he heard the explanation. Well, Ark also felt a little bad this time. But was he the type to listen to his conscience?

“I can bring troops into the secret dungeon and stop Alan. However, the quantum device can’t move a lot of troops. There are 1,800 people hidden in the secret dungeon. They’re no match for Alan. But it will be enough to tie his ankles until Silvana is captured and the other troops enter the dungeon. Please.”

“Oh, as expected from Dark Wolf-nim!”

The alliance leaders exclaimed as they heard the secret strategy. After Ark explained the strategy, he left and visited Wormer.

“Wormer, are you ready?”

“The MG is charging now.”

Wormer was charging the quantum machine with a machine that looked like a kettle. The allied forces had gathered the fragments of the destroyed obelisks and he was using them to charge the MG. After a while, the MG was full and the quantum machine started to make noise. Wormer examined the dashboard before nodding.

“Okay. The frequency is captured. 720 metres underground..... Isn’t it good? It wouldn’t have been easy to assemble even with the design.....

Anyway, the receiver is good for being created in a short time. Let's see..... Ark, it can move 500 people with the MG charged now."

"500? That's less than I expected."

Ark sighed and muttered. 500 people. When combined with the troops in the secret dungeon, it was only 2,300 people. Wormer replied petulantly.

"Damn, do you think that spatial movement is that simple?"

"I understand. Then prepare for the move."

Things wouldn't change even if he complained to Wormer. And whether it was 1,800 or 2,300 people, they still couldn't confront Alan. All they had to do was find a way to 'stop' Alan. So Ark picked out the troops to enter the secret dungeon. Considering the circumstances, Ark only selected members of Dark Eden. Now everything was organized.

The success or failure of this war hung on Ark, Shambala, the rehabilitation members, Wormer and Dark Eden.

"JusticeMan ajusshi, please take command of the allied forces here."

"Understood. Contact me soon."

"Yes, thank you."

Ark left the allied forces to JusticeMan and moved to the quantum machine.

"Come, let's go!"

Wormer started the machine as soon as all the preparations finished. And sparks flew from the antenna attached to the top of the machine. The sparks intensified and wound around the 500 coalition members. Then the coalition members turned into light and were sucked into the antenna.

Jiiiiiiik.....kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The antenna began spinning and shot out a beam of light into the ground. The 500 soldiers who had been changed into particles entered the ground.

Act 7: Dungeon Keeper

Chwajijijijik!

A big underground enclosed room was flooded with darkness. Violent sparks suddenly spread from the ceiling of the closed room. The sparks jumped and concentrated on the satellite antenna installed in the room. A deep flash spread across the area and changed into hundreds of people at the same time.

“They’ve arrived!”

Several beasts and coalition members gathered around the antenna shouted.

“They’ve come. The elite of Nagaran’s allied forces!”

Hundreds of soldiers appeared among the light! That’s right. They were the selected elite soldiers of Nagaran’s allied forces. They arrived at the underground room on the 60th floor where the raccoons had installed the movement receiver. Their aim was to protect Nagaran.....

“Kuaaaaack! F-fire!”

“Ugh! D-disgusting..... B-bag.....uweeeeeek!”

The users ran back and forth and screamed. Some users with their asses on fire rolled along the ground while others with their heads on fire slammed into the wall and shrieked. More than half were vomiting while others were stretched on the ground like they were dying. Ark was also on the ground and vomiting.

“D-dammit..... What on earth.....this is?”

He had travelled around New World using the Letter Movement. However, the quantum movement seemed many times more horrible. While the Letter Movement felt like he was being shaken in a jar, the quantum movement felt like he had been grinded in a blender. It really was a horrible feeling. In fact, 70~80% of the users' health was lost thanks to the quantum movement. If they had moved any further then all of the soldiers would probably be dead. Ark realized once again to not trust in Wormer's inventions.

“I already told you. I made it quickly and there was a slight problem with the stability. The quantum conversion rate isn't 100% so not all the obstacles in the ground could be avoided. If I had the quantum machine from my base then the conversion rate would've been 100%. Well, even so.....”

That's right. The quantum machine was made in a rush so it couldn't convert the users 100%. According to Wormer, the conversion rate was around 70~80%. Therefore while Ark's group had been moving through the ground, they had been hit by the dirt, gravel and rocks. That was why some of them caught on fire or had bruises over their whole bodies. However, surprisingly Wormer was fine.

“Who would be harmed from small shakes like that? Young people these days have weak minds.”

Wormer twirled his beard and murmured. He was the one who tested his inventions so he wouldn't even blink an eye if he was turned into a monster. He really was an absurd human being.

‘Anyway, at least we've all arrived alive.’

Ark barely recovered his spirit as he looked around. After Alan had occupied Silvana, he had ordered the coalition members in the hidden dungeon to hide on the 60th floor. There were 1,800 people but 1,500 consisted of the Meow, Wolrang, raccoons and the Eastern Nation. The losses of these NPCs would be catastrophic to Dark Eden. As Ark

directed, the members of Dark Eden had enclosed themselves inside a room on the 60th floor. That room was the place where Ark moved with his selected users. While Ark braced himself, the coalition members ran up.

"You're here!"

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak ssak!

But Radun was the first one to greet him as he moved around Ark's waist.

"Well done Radun. The current status?"

Ark stroked Radun's head as he asked. Then Boramae who was in charge of the group replied.

"The demons are currently on the 56th floor."

"That's one day after they've entered the 51st floor..... It is pretty fast."

But it was natural for Alan to move quickly. When Ark had first entered the Abyss, it had taken him one day to go down one floor. It was because the degree of difficulty in the Abyss was different from the 50 floors before it. However, that was when it was full of elite monsters. Thanks to Dark Eden hunting, it was difficult to see any monsters in the Abyss at the moment. While the Abyss was a dangerous area with various traps, it wasn't enough to slow down Alan's group. Boramae continued talking.

"The movements of the demons suddenly slowed down on the 55th floor. I've been monitoring them since they've entered the Abyss and they are still looking for the stairs down from the 55th floor."

'Huhuhu, it is like that.'

A satisfied smile appeared on Ark's face after hearing Boramae's words. In fact, Ark had two aims when he used Racard. One of it was to use Racard to distract Alan's group so Radun could be safe. And the

other reason was to slow down the movement of Alan's group. After Alan captured Racard, he probably got his hands on Wormer's design that Ark handed to Racard. But this design wasn't for the receiving but the transmission device.

'There are no monsters in the Abyss. Of course, that is because of Dark Eden's NPC unit but Alan doesn't know that. If he knew then he would kill the NPC unit in order to weaken Dark Eden's power.'

And Ark had sent Racard into the secret dungeon without telling him the strategy. He was informed that there were 3,000~4,000 troops inside the Abyss. And when Racard entered the Abyss, Ark would use the remote communication to explain more.

'And Alan will get that information.'

Ark didn't expect that Racard would be able to keep his mouth shut when being tortured. If Racard was caught then there was no doubt that Alan would obtain the information. Then what would Alan thing? Racard was caught and there was no way for him to run away. Then Alan couldn't ignore the possibility that a group was hiding somewhere to ambush him. So Alan was looking through every corner of every floor before advancing to check for any ambushes. Therefore Ark had used Racard to distract and slow down Alan. It was achieving two purposes at once.

'Alan will never imagine that I am on the 60th floor.'

"Now what do we do?"

Boramae looked at the collapsed special attack unit with a sceptical expression. It was reasonable. There were only 500 people in the special attack unit. When combined, it was only 2,300 people. On the other hand, Alan led 10,000 demons and users from the Avenger guild. They had to somehow stop Alan until the allied forces captured Silvana and joined them. Furthermore, the special attack unit was in this state as soon as they arrived. But Ark's face was full of confidence.

“Our aim isn’t to kill Alan’s group but to stop them! We have to buy time until the allied forces arrive.”

“But won’t that be difficult?”

“No, not at all.”

Ark said with a smirk.

“Now, now! Is it show time? Quickly bring me a map of the dungeon! It is the reason I came along. Good. I’ll make that fellow realize his mistake in turning my inventions into scrap iron. Oh, what? Didn’t I say to bring it quickly? I said, a map! And is there anyone who knows how to use a hammer? Bring them all to me!”

Wormer waved his arms and shouted.

“What is with that noisy pig?”

Ark smiled at Boramae’s question and replied.

“My secret weapon to thwart Alan.”

“Alan-nim, it appeared again!”

A member of the Avenger guild who was searching the area exclaimed. The Avenger member pointed to the underground valley where there was a signpost.

<Dungeon Keeper Says>

Danger! I can’t assure what will happen to you.

If you don’t want it to happen then turn back.

“These bastards really.....”

Alan's face distorted after reading the contents. Then the Avenger said carefully.

"Alan-nim, what will we do?"

"What?"

"The last time we ignored the warning....."

"Then you want to believe the warning and turn back?"

Alan glared at the Avenger member. The Avenger member flinched and stuttered.

"T-that's not.....because we can't search for the traps in the Abyss....."

"Fool! Why do you think I brought along 10,000 demons?"

Alan shouted with irritation.

"Jewel!"

"Yes, Alan-nim."

"Order 200 Tallons to march into the valley!"

"Understood. Tallon unit stand in line!"

Jewel shouted and the Tallons gathered in front of the valley. Fear of the unidentified monsters shone in the Tallons' eyes. But they were tied by the black obelisks and couldn't refuse Alan's command. Although they trembled with fear, the Tallon started walking towards the valley at Alan's command. The reason the Tallons were trembling with fear was because of the signpost the Avenger member discovered. After Alan and the demons entered the secret dungeon, they had steadily marched forward. The elite monsters in the dungeon weren't a match for the 10,000 demons. But that all changed once they crossed the 50th floor towards the 51st and the Abyss. The monsters were just marching forward like normal. Then they encountered the cannibalistic rocks! And the floor suddenly dropped and sent hundreds of demons to their

death! Spurting lava geysers..... That's right. The demons weren't threatened by the monsters but by traps. These traps were artificially created so it was impossible for the hunters to discover it in advance.

'But that's not the recent problem.'

Alan bit his lip with an annoyed look. Currently Alan was on the 59th floor. He had broken through 9 floors on the Abyss. After moving through 9 floors, they could somehow cope with the traps. But things started to change on the 59th floor. A signpost had caught their eyes as soon as they entered the 59th floor.

<Dungeon Keeper Says>

Welcome to the Abyss!

Welcome to any explorers of the Abyss. I have some advice for everyone who rashly enters this dangerous cave.

This road might be dangerous. Please watch your feet.

"What the, what is this?"

Alan thought it was just a joke when he saw the first signpost. He had ignored it and just walked past. Suddenly a huge number of rocks poured down like hail from both sides. They weren't just rocks.

"Huck! T-these are the cannibalism rocks!"

"Kueeeek!"

When the Avengers and demons were hit by the rocks, their flesh and bones were sucked into it. It soon became apparent that the traps were linked with the signposts. If it said 'look after your feet' then lava would pour from above or 'look above' and acid would shoot out from below. After experiencing this situation a few times, Alan decided to go the opposite way but then the traps started occurring from the direction indicated on the signpost. Someone was enjoying themselves playing around.....!

‘What the? These aren’t like the natural traps experience so far. Obviously someone created these traps intentionally. The only think I can think of it the Dark Eden members the bat spoke about.’

But the problem wasn’t resolved even when he figured out the opponent. There were a lot of signposts on the 59th floor. In other words, there were many traps laid out like spider webs. In a place like this, carelessly distributing the troops to search for Dark Eden was like suicide. Of course, if someone had installed the traps then hunters or thieves should be able to sense the traps. But these weren’t simple traps and the signposts were cleverly linked to natural traps so finding them took a significant amount of time. It was like searching for a needle in a wide desert. Alan couldn’t move forward until he found the traps one by one.

‘That Ark, I can’t believe he discovered information about the Hell River and dragged the alliances of Nagaran into this.’

The allied forces were currently surrounding Silvana and striking violently. It would be a problem if the demons protecting Silvana were completely wiped out. After the killed the demons, the Nagaran allied forces would flock into the secret dungeon. And the combined forces would join up with Ark. Since Alan had already cleared the monsters, it would only take them 2~3 days to catch up with Alan.

‘If I keep on searching for traps then there is no telling what will happen.’

Alan was running out of time.

‘Fortunately we’re almost at the destination. Although it is vexing but the only way is to submit to damage.’

So Alan instantly sacrificed victims to the traps. Alan had bought most of the high ranking demons like the Hemeras and the Dullahans. He didn’t know what would happen in the secret dungeon so he bought as much demons as possible to reduce the casualties. So he had the low ranking demons advance first to intentionally trigger the traps. In other

words, it was the system of releasing the traps with their bodies. It was the reason why the Tallons trembled with fear as they advanced.

“What are you doing? Hurry!”

Alan roared at the Tallons who moved a little quicker. Then Alan smiled at the sight.

“Huhuhu, it might be cruel but being able to control demons and send them to their deaths is great.”

Anyway, the Tallons marched into the valley and crossed the place where the signpost was. A flag on the signpost suddenly snapped up.

<Dungeon Keeper Says>

You have ignored the warnings and now there will be a penalty.

“Be on the lookout!”

Alan shouted as Timosi ran forward. The Avenger and demons stopped with a tense expression. This flag was a sign that a trap had been triggered. And it wasn't a simple trap that had been activated so no one could predict the effects. However, a long time passed and nothing happened. Alan observed the situation for a while before his face warped.

“Dammit, it was just a bluff?”

Alan became even more irate. Signposts were stuck into the ground of the 59th floor. But not all of them were connected to traps. Despite a threat being written on the signpost, sometimes nothing would happen. That was the reason why he decided to sacrifice the monsters to advance. With such threats, they might waste several hours looking for a trap that wasn't there.

“Damn, all troops advance into the valley!”

“Alan-nim!”

Then one of the Avengers flinched and pointed near the signpost. Alan turned and saw that something was quickly moving near the signpost. It was a small light. The light moved quickly and Alan, the Avengers and demons gaped with surprise. The light crossed the valley and moved up a pillar to where a sign could be seen on the ceiling.

<Dungeon Keeper Says>

Byung, did you think it was safe?

‘What, what the?’

“Scatter! Get away from here as quickly as possible!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwang, kwa kwa kwa kwang!

A huge sound rang out from the ceiling. It sounded like dozens of bombs were exploding quickly! Cracks started to spread on the ceiling as sharp rocks fell like hail over the heads of the demons and Avengers.

“Ack, what the hell?”

Alan turned and ran 100 metres using ‘quickness.’ Dust was pouring down from above. The sounds of broken bones and pierced flesh as well as screams could be heard. Of course, not a log of demons died from the falling rocks but they had their health shaved away.

“Quickly arrange into units and report the damage!”

“The 3rd and 4th Tallon unit has been destroyed!”

“The 6th and 9th Hemera units have suffered a blow and are close to being destroyed!”

“The 13th unit is down to 40% health.....kuaaaack!”

Pepeng, pepeng, pepeng, pepeng!

An Avenger screamed and a violent clash was heard among the dust.

“What is going on? Magician unit, blow away the dust using wind magic!”

“Spirits of the wind running through the blue sky.....Wind!”

The magicians recited spells and a storm blew the dust away. Alan’s face stiffened at the sight revealed.

“T-those guys are.....?”

After the dust disappeared, he saw that the demons were being attacked by soldiers. They were soldiers with black masks and black clothes! Alan had seen NPCs in those clothes a long time ago. It was the assassin clan living near Selebrid. That’s right. The Dark Brothers. They had settled in Seutandal and became the Eastern Nation and now they were apart of Ark’s Dark Eden. As Alan looked on, two people flew all over the place and the demons fell into turmoil from their attacks!

“Dark Strike!”

“Cruciate Flower Wave!”

They were Ark and Shambala.

“That’s right, it was those guys!”

Alan exclaimed as he saw both of them. Alan had been inwardly thinking it was strange. A person had been playing tricks with the signposts! The person using such methods was his old enemy Ark. The Dark Eden members hiding in the secret dungeon would obviously be taking orders from Ark. He was convinced that Ark was behind everything. But there was a separate issue.

“How did they get here?”

Once one question was solved, other questions popped up. However, he couldn’t answer those questions now.

“Catch them! Don’t worry about the others! Ark and Shambala, catch those two!”

The demons shrieked and ran forward at Alan's command. Then Ark, Shambala and the Easter Nation escaped.

"That's it, let's go!"

"Retreat! Everybody retreat!"

"Chase them. You absolutely can't miss! Surround and trap them!"

Alan had 10,000 demons and the Avengers members so they could easily form many layers to surround them. The demons were quickly rallied and they ran after Ark. Then Ark, Shambala and the Eastern Nation were cornered under a cliff. The demons moved and encircled Ark's group.

"Kuack, dammit.....!"

Ark looked up at the cliff that was dozens of metres high and groaned. And Alan ordered in a cold voice.

"Your tricks end here. Trample them!"

"Kuwaaaah!"

The demons bared their fangs and claws and swarmed. Then there was a soft vibration the moment the demons and the Avengers moved. Ark who had been fidgeting smiled and yelled.

"Hyung-nims, now!"

"Okay!"

At the same time Jjak-tung, Yapsab, the other rehabilitation members and hundreds of soldiers appeared on the cliff. And they pushed the rocks piled on the cliff down. While the rocks were falling, there was a mechanical sound and the ground where Ark, Shambala and the Eastern Nation was standing rose up the cliff like an elevator.

"What, what the? Stop them! Stop those guys!"

Alan burst out as he saw Ark escaping from right under his nose. The demons shrieked and used their claws to climb the cliff.

“It’s too late. Start!”

Jjak-tung laughed and raised his hands.

The hundreds of Dark Eden members started hammering at the cliff. They struck there on the stakes that were placed here and there.

Ku kwa kwa kwa kwa, kwa kwa, kwa kwa kwa kwa!

Every time the stake was driven in a bit more, cracks would spread until there was a roar and the cliff collapsed. The demons climbing up were buried by the falling cliff.

But that wasn’t the problem.

Ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku, ku ku ku ku!

Lava surged from the cliff after it collapsed.

“T-that.....lava!”

“The rocks were blocking the lava and now it is pouring out!”

“R-run away! Escape to a high place!”

-Kurak, kurak, madurama, kurak!

The Avengers and demons gathered in front of the cliff screamed and ran away. Alan looked at the shattered cliff and shouted.

“S-stop! There isn’t a lot of lava flowing from the cliff. Don’t come here!”

-Kurak, kurak, madurama, kurak!

When the lava surged, Alan couldn’t properly control the demons anymore. The demons screamed and stepped on each other trying to climb up to a high place. The same Tallons were stepped on by the Heavy Walkers and the bigger demons and were squashed.

“Those stupid guys.....!”

Alan stared at the demons with furious eyes and raised his head. Alan’s face darkened as he caught sight of Ark, Shambala, the rehabilitation members, the Eastern Nation and the Dark Eden members on top of the cliff. His voice sounded like a rock was stuck in his mouth.

“Ark!”

“.....It’s just starting. Let’s enjoy it properly from now on.”

Ark grinned and disappeared.

“Isn’t this surprisingly fun?”

“Did you see Alan’s face before?”

“Kikiki, they look like chickens from up here.”

Jjak-tung and Yapsab who were carrying hammers on their shoulders laughed and chattered together. Ark also felt like his stress was disappearing.

“Huhuhu, that Alan. He must be seething right now.”

Ark grinned as he walked along the path on top of the cliff. It was unnecessary to explain but the signposts Alan found on the 59th floor were Ark’s work. The signposts which threatened them were all intended to limit Alan’s movements. However, the signpost wasn’t exactly Ark’s work.

‘I never thought that Wormer’s ‘inventions’ could be used in such a way. His skills can also be applied in this way.’

That’s right. The signposts in conjunction with the traps were Wormer’s work. In fact, Ark had planned to use guerrilla attacks along with natural traps to stop Alan’s movements. He had fully identified all the

terrain traps in the Abyss and planned to take advantage of that. They were 2,300 against 10,000. That was more than 4 times the troops. Furthermore, Alan had bought a large amount of high ranking demons so the natural traps couldn't really stifle their movements. In addition, 1,500 out of the 2,300 troops were beasts and NPCs. It would be a serious blow to Dark Eden's power if they were killed.

'However, I will sacrifice them if it means protecting Nagaran.'

Ark had such thoughts and became resolute.

"It isn't necessary to have them fight."

The person who spoke was Wormer.

"What are you saying?"

"How do you think I raised my level to over 400 if I only made inventions?"

Wormer laughed. Ark had also been wondering that. Wormer was an inventor. He was a user who stayed in the underground base and made strange machines. Yet he was level 410. It was almost comparable to Ark's level. Wormer nodded at Ark's expression.

"There's no need for a long explanation. You said you captured this dungeon before? Do you have a map of it?"

"Yes. That....."

Ark handed over the map made with his 'cartography' skill. Wormer examined the map with a satisfied expression and laughed.

"Oh, this is quite detailed? I like it. This should be enough."

"What do you mean?"

"I will show you how an inventor hunts."

Wormer opened the map and started to place draw various shapes and formulas on it.

“The ground here overturns? That’s funny. But only a few will be caught with these substandard traps. If I want to stop those guys then I need to make some improvements. Here....oh, cannibalistic rocks? They should be moved and dropped over here. Ah, if this cliff is pulled down then the river of lave will flow. Well well, shall I drive in stakes here and here?”

The shapes and formulas Wormer drew on the map were plans and devices to remodel the traps. A timed equipment to break the aerial bridge or an equipment to drop the cannibalistic rocks. And the direction and places to hit to make the cliff collapse.....it was using the terrain and remodelling the traps to get the biggest effect from the traps! That’s right. This was the real value of the inventor Wormer. Needless to say, Wormer didn’t have any combat abilities. While he could get experience for inventions, it wouldn’t be enough to reach Ark’s level. Wormer’s secret in reaching level 410 was his ability to convert an entire dungeon.

Wormer didn’t explore and kill monsters inside dungeons like warriors. If he found a new dungeon then he would completely explore it while being killed a few times to get updated terrain information. He would make an invention with various skills and lure the monsters to a room where they would be exterminated with the invention. Wormer generously plagued Alan using this knowledge. While Alan was capturing the 56, 57 and 58th floors, Wormer gathered the raccoons and completely reconstructed the 59th floor. That was the identity of the traps that were making Alan and the demons miserable. Thanks to that, Ark could grab Alan’s ankle without fighting directly.

“Now, let’s move on to the next place!”

A rehabilitation member said in a lively voice. At that moment, Shambala tilted his head to one side and asked.

“By the way, why did we attack the demons directly just now? We didn’t deal that much damage to the demons. And if we made a mistake then we would’ve been surrounded by the demons.”

“I just wanted to make Alan lose it.”

Ark smiled and replied.

“It is because of Alan’s response to the trap before. In fact, I was most worried about that method. Using weak demons as scapegoats to trigger the traps. If he checks every signpost that way then it won’t be a threat anymore. But now that I’ve showed Alan I can attack any time, he can’t use that method.”

“Hmm, you still think of such petty tricks.”

“It is tactics.”

“It is a dirty tactic.”

Shambala snorted and muttered. That’s right. It was the reason why Ark attacked despite previously only harassing Alan through the traps. It was to show him that the danger wasn’t only traps. Now that Alan confirmed Ark was here, he would have to consider it when thinking about how to move his troops. And his movements would slow because he has too many ideas.

‘Since Alan entered the 59th floor, around 1,700 demons and Avengers had died. Before they come down to the 60th floor from the 59th, I have to reduce the troops by 3,000~4,000 to ensure that we don’t receive damage. Then there would be 6,000~7,000 demons left. We have 2,300 troops. While a head on confrontation is impossible, Wormer has converted the 60th floor into a last line of defense so Dark Eden and the special attack unit should be able to deal with the demons!’

Ark thought while walking.

“Ark!”

A loud roar suddenly echoed through the dungeon. It was Alan using voice amplification magic.

"Huhuhu, he must be quite angry at my appearance. Yes, just continue shouting."

Ark chuckled as he heard Alan's voice.

"You cowardly fellow, show you face immediately!"

"You fool, do you think I will come out just because you called?"

Ark scratched his neck and sneered.

"Master."

Then he heard a familiar voice. Ark flinched and stopped walking. And he hurriedly returned to the cliff and hid his body behind a rock while looking down. Alan and the demons were gathered near the collapsed cliff. But Ark wasn't looking at Alan or the demons. In front of Alan was a bat confined in a huge birdcage with a black magnetic field around it.

'What, what the? Isn't that Racard?'

That's right. The bat trapped inside the birdcage was Racard.

'What is going on? Wasn't he recalled back to the Dark Earth?'

Ark couldn't understand what was happening. Around 18 hours ago, he had received a message that his connection to Racard had been broken. Ark had thought that Racard died after being captured by Alan. Yet now Racard was locked in a cage?

'If Racard didn't die then perhaps the cage broke the connection?'

Ark stared at the black magnetic field around the cage. Alan who was watching for a reaction shouted again after a while.

"If you don't appear then you will lose this bat!"

‘I will lose Racard?’

Ark looked on with an astounded expression. Racard was a summon. Unlike regular NPCs, he would be resurrected like a user. Yet here Alan was threatening to kill Ark’s pet?

‘That guy, is he crazy? What is he saying?’

“I guess Ark had completely abandoned you.”

Alan murmured to Racard after a short time passed. Then a huge figure wearing a hood approached the birdcage. When the man appeared, Racard who was flying about instantly turned pale.

“H-hik. M-Master! S-save me..... T-that guy is.....”

“Infector, begin.”

The man then lowered his hood. He had a pale white face like flour was applied to it and red eyes. The man cheered with delight after hearing Alan’s command. Blood red lips opened and revealed sharp fangs dripping with saliva.

‘Is that a vampire? What are they trying to do?’

Alan’s strange attitude and Racard’s reaction.....something was strange. Was there something Ark didn’t know? Ark considered and quickly used Eyes of the Cat. Then he automatically used Skill Penetration and the information window appeared.

-Infector’s (Ancient Vampire) skill: Kin Blood-sucking

A vampire is often called the nobles of the night, with lives a few hundred times longer than humans or monsters. Among them exists the purebred vampires with lives spanning over 1,000 years that the world has now forgotten after they withdrew into seclusion. They became driven to the brink of extinction thanks to Kin Blood-sucking.

Kin Blood-sucking is a vampire’s secret technique and the most feared

skill among all vampires. Vampires who use Kin Blood-sucking can bit and absorb the magic and very existence of their target. Despite vampires having their souls decomposed, even they can become a target. Since the vampire's primarily used Kin Blood-sucking among themselves, the number of vampires rapidly reduced. The Vampire Lord who sensed this crisis named 'Kin Blood-sucking' as a prohibited technique and sealed it into the darkness.

<A vampire that absorbs the blood will have their magic strengthened. When all of the blood and magic is absorbed, the vampire who was robbed of it will be completely destroyed>

Act 8: Racard's Destruction

'Huk, what is this?'

Ark's heart fell after he checked the information window.

"Infector is a vampire who has lived for more than 1,000 years. Even if your bat is a summon, if he encounters Infector's Kin Blood-sucking skill then he will be completely destroyed. If you don't want the summon that you've raised to disappear then reveal yourself!"

Alan reiterated the information Ark already confirmed from the information window. That's right. Infector had the ability to eat another vampire. Even if he was a pet, he was still a vampire so Kin Blood-sucking would work and destroy Racard!

'Recently Racard's work has become smaller but.....'

In fact, Ark didn't really use Racard that much these days. Radun was the pet that he always used thanks to his role as a bag. Purital had become more useful than Racard after evolving because of Clad Armour. But the only thing Racard did these days was use satellite surveillance mode. Despite the low utilization, they had been together from the start. Racard was also the only one among his 3 pets who could

talk. During the time travelling alone, how much comfort had Racard been to him? Yet now Racard would be destroyed?

‘It doesn’t matter if Alan is aiming for my life. But Alan’s goal is Dark Eden. If Dark Eden moves in order to save Racard then they would be wiped out.....’

His method of stopping Alan would disappear. And it would lead to Silvana being flooded by the Hell River. It was Racard’s life against Silvana. In this situation he could only chose one option. No, if he thought about it calmly then he didn’t have to choose one option. Even if Ark ran out now, what guarantee was there that Alan would release Racard? Alan was 100%, not 1000% bound to destroy Racard. There was no way he could run out and save Racard. He had to give up. Despite those rational words, Ark couldn’t simply give up on Racard.

‘W-what is an alternative method.....?’

Ark was distressed thinking about it. Alan looked around and smiled as he muttered.

“Look at those tears. Infector!”

“Waaaahhhh! M-Master! S-save me.....”

As soon as Infector approached, Racard started crying and trembling. At the same time, the numerous times he spent with Racard passed through his head like a kaleidoscope. Finally he couldn’t endure it anymore and was about to stand up. Then Infector drove his fangs into Racard’s neck. Racard trembled and moaned.

“Uwa, waaah, waaaahhhh.....”

At that moment, Racard’s body blurred and changed to red crystals which were sucked into Infector’s mouth. Suddenly a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-Your summon Racard had his blood sucked by the vampire Infector.

*If Infector absorbs all his blood then Racard will be destroyed.

<Absorption Rate: 1%>

“Oh my god!”

Ark’s face paled.

His head was also a blur and he couldn’t think of any ideas. The footage of Racard having his blood sucked replayed repeatedly in his head. The scene replayed every time the message window appeared.

-Your summon Racard has been absorbed.

<Absorption Rate: 5%.....10%.....15%.....20%>

Infector became increasingly healthier looking. In an instant Racard’s absorption had reached 20%. After Ark saw the message window, it felt like cold water had been poured on him.

‘T-that bastard. Doing this type of thing to my pet!’

Ark glared at Infector. The pet that he had raised and spoiled (?) for 2 years was going to be eaten? Well, it was Ark’s fault that the pet he raised for 2 years was in danger.....anyway!

‘I have to protect the pet I raised for 2 years!’

However, he was already late. Racard had been eaten. And he wouldn’t come back. Even if he ran and killed Infector right now, there was no guarantee that Racard would be saved. Alan definitely wouldn’t sit back and watch while Ark killed Infector. No, this was Alan’s trap. It was that Ark wouldn’t resist his anger and would come running out. If he didn’t move he would lose Racard. If he moved to save Racard then he would lose Silvana or even both. The situation was clear. But he couldn’t accept it emotionally.

‘What can I do.....wait? Come to think of it.....’

Ark who was torturing himself suddenly raised his head. Despite Ark's anxieties, Racard wasn't fully absorbed yet. That's right. Racard wasn't fully absorbed yet. But Racard was in Infector's stomach. Then.....

"Summon release, Racard!"

.....Couldn't he compel his pet to be recalled? Then Racard would be released to the summoning port in Dark Earth. Since 20% of him had been absorbed, it was likely that Racard would lose stats when he was recalled. But in this situation he might be destroyed. Ark couldn't begrudge the loss of 20% stats.

"It doesn't matter. If I can somehow save him.....please, please, please....."

-Your control over your summon is insufficient and your summoning release has failed!

"N-no! I can do this! Summon release, Racard! Summon release, Racard! Summon release, Racard!"

Ark shouted like a crazy person. But Ark's resistance was stopped by the enormous wall that was New World's system.

-Your control over your summon is insufficient and your summoning release has failed!

-Your control over your summon is insufficient and your summoning release has failed!

-Your control over your summon is insufficient and your summoning release has failed!

-Your summon Racard has been digested.

<Absorption Rate: 45%.....50%.....>

The message that showed Racard being absorbed appeared. Ark felt something inside him snap.

“Dammit. Really.....is there another way?”

Ark feebly leaned back against the wall and muttered with a hopeless voice. Then he noticed something unusual. When he thought back to the beginning, he noticed the source of the feeling. It was the message window. Normally when his pet died it would say ‘your summon has been recalled.’ The previous message came to mind. When he thought Racard had died, the message window said ‘the connection with your summon has been lost.’ Thanks to the frenzy of the battle, Ark had just accepted that Racard was dead.

‘This time I also made the same mistake of not reading the message window properly!’

His summoning wasn’t released so he had thought about giving up. But when he checked the message window again, he realized it wasn’t that simple. His summoning release had failed but at the beginning it said that his ‘control was insufficient.’ If it was in regards to his controlling power.....didn’t it mean his controlling power had to become stronger than Infector in order to release the summoning?

‘Controlling power!’

Ark’s eyes flashed as he thought of an idea. A numerical value was applied whenever a pet was summoned. The value of the controlling power decided whether a pet would obey or not. In order to summon a higher ranking pet, a large controlling power value was needed. If it was too low then the pets would refuse the order or attack their owner. When he thought back, Ark remembered that his pets didn’t really obey him in the beginning. Ark had summoned 3 pets at the same time so his controlling power had dispersed between all of them. But Ark had tamed his pets using a combination of threats, violence and food.

‘If I increase my controlling power then I can release the summoning!’

Ark turned and shouted.

“All summoners come forward!”

A few users came running at Ark's shout. They were the Necromancers whose profession normally involved summons. They possessed some magic and combat power but mainly used their summons to attack. While it was a strong profession during the early stages of the game, there were various restrictions as their level increased so there were less high levelled Necromancers. Among the 500 members of the attack unit, only 7 could use summoning. However, Ark hadn't called them or a headcount. He intended to borrow the equipment from the summoners.

"Does anybody have equipment that gives extra controlling power as a bonus?"

That's right. It was the reason why Ark called the summoners. The controlling power over their pets could decide the combat power. Therefore most summoners chose options that gave bonus controlling power. By raising the controlling power, the pets would follow orders more obediently and their combat power would increase. If he borrowed equipment with controlling power then he could make up for what he was lacking.

"I have earrings that give +90 controlling power."

"This is a necklace that gives +180 controlling power."

The summoners handed over their equipment after hearing his explanation. There was more equipment with controlling power but they were restricted to summoners so Ark could only wear the accessories. When he wore the necklace, earrings and ring, his controlling power increase by 570. It was 1.5 times Ark's original controlling power!

"Summon release Radun, summon release Purital!"

Ark also cancelled his summoning of Radun and Purital to increase his controlling power. He increased his concentration to the maximum and shouted.

"Summon release, Racard!"

-Your control over your summon is insufficient and your summoning release has failed!

“.....Dammit!”

But the result was the same. Even though his controlling power had doubled, it couldn't surpass Infector's controlling power. Ark instantly became gloomy.

“Is there a way to gain more controlling power? A food which increases it.....”

Ark muttered as he thought of various ways. Then something rose in his head. This method might not be possible but he had to try. He no longer had time to think about it. Ark immediately executed his idea.

“Animal King set special option, Wild Strength!”

At that moment, Ark's armour shone with a brilliant light. The shapes of the merpeople, Meow, raccoons, and Wolrang emerged one after the other. Finally Wild Strength was exercised with the appearance of the White Tiger.

-The Wild Strength skill from the Animal King set has been activated.

<The effect of all skills will increase by 50% for 10 minutes. However, mana consumption will increase by 100%>

This was the method Ark came up with in the desperate situation. The power of all his skills had increased by 50%. His Summon Demon and Summon Release were also skills. In other words, Wild Strength would increase his Summon release skill by 50%. Ark's controlling power was 1,100. The accessories also gave him an extra 570. If 50% was applied to the 1,670 then it would be 2,505 controlling power! His controlling power had increased by 2.5 times!

“Now it is time to finish this. Damn, that stupid Racard! I will even chase you to the depths of hell and shove food into your mouth. Summon release, Racard!”

Ark clenched his teeth firmly and glared. He had used every method possible. It was him versus New World. He had to entrust the results to New World’s system. But in the next moment, something no one expected occurred.

“W-what, this strong power.....”

Infector flinched and suddenly disappeared. Alan quickly shouted as Infector disappeared before his eyes.

“Jewel!”

“I found it. They’re on the cliff where they disappeared from before!”

Jewel who had been tracking the flow of mana pointed towards the cliff. Alan’s eyes flashed and he ordered.

“As expected, you’ve exposed your tail. You’re still hiding there? Okay. The flooded lava has hardened already. Catch those guys!”

“Kuwaaaaah!”

The gargoyles flew towards the cliff first while the Avengers and demons followed.

“Damn, they found us!”

“Let’s move on from this place!”

“Ark, we can think about the problem with Racard later!”

Shambala grabbed Ark and ran away.

Hwiriririri!

Inside a dark bedroom. A vortex suddenly appeared in front of a magic seal drawn in a corner. It was a pale vampire wearing black robes, Infector.

“Ugh, what, what the?”

Infector looked around with puzzled eyes at the unexpected place he appeared in. He looked at the magic seal emitting a shallow light and understood the situation.

“Summoning Port.....

Infector frowned unpleasantly. That’s right. The magic seal in the corner of the bedroom was the Summoning Port that Ark had registered. The Summoning Port was where he had registered Racard’s recall spot. In other words, Infector had flown to the corner of Seutandal where the Vampire Lord ruled Dark Earth.

“Only humans with more than 1,000 points can surpass my controlling power. But shouldn’t his pet have moved to the Summoning Port? That Racard, he still had some will left? I had thought it was surprisingly easy to threaten him.”

Infector then looked at his bulging stomach. No matter how strong Ark’s controlling power was, it wouldn’t have worked if Racard had lost all willpower. Despite Racard’s feeble state, he had responded when his Master called.

“The vampire that was about to die tried to meet his owner’s call in that urgent situation. Doesn’t that mean he has a deep rapport with his owner?”

But that was just Infector’s misunderstanding. Racard who was on the verge of death had responded to Ark’s urgent order. However, it was completely unrelated to mental rapport. Racard was freaked out by Ark’s threat of chasing him to the ends of hell to make him eat food. Racard believed that Ark was really a person who would do

that. Therefore Racard had instinctively obeyed the order despite his unconscious state. That was the cause of Infector's misunderstanding.

"Anyway, this place is Dark Earth..... That is a problem."

Infector muttered as he looked around anxiously. This place was Dark Earth, a sealed off place in Seutandal. It was over 1,000 kilometres away from Silvana. It would be difficult to get back. However, Infector wasn't worried about returning. The problem was this was the land of the vampires where the Vampire Lord ruled.

"If I'm found by the Vampire Lord then I'll become extinct. I have to escape before they get here!"

Infector hurriedly rushed to exit the bedroom with a fearful look. Suddenly the bedroom warped and there was a wave of enormous energy. The strong energy indicated the presence of spatial movement magic. Infector who was running to the door hurriedly hid behind the bed.

'S-shit! Isn't this wave of energy only produced by spatial movement? If the magic is this strong..... Lord! The Vampire Lord? It can't be. Encountering the Lord in a place like this.....'

Fear filled Infector's face as he thought about the Vampire Lord. At the same time, someone appeared from the warped space. Wearing a black hood with complicated designs carved on it.....A fluttering cloak with a dark aura around it and huge black wings which emitted a feeling of oppression. It was a vampire with an intense presence! The vampire looked around the area doubtfully.

"Strange. The magic I sensed that was produced in this area....."

'That guy is.....?'

Infector's eyes widened as watched from behind the bed. The vampire who appeared in the room wasn't the Vampire Lord he was concerned about. It was the vampire referee that appeared when Racard defeated Karakul. The reason that the vampire referee showed up here was

because of Infector. The one cardinal rule in Dark Earth was that vampires couldn't invade other vampire territories. If they broke the rules and invaded another vampire's territory then the magic would conflict. And the vampire referee was the highest ranked vampire who was in charge of monitoring other vampires. He had sensed the collision of magic and had used spatial magic to check the situation.

'The vampire referee..... Kukuku, I'm lucky today.'

Infector licked his lips and smiled with delight after seeing his opponent. The moment the vampire referee approached the door, Infector shot out from behind the bed like a lightning bolt.

"Uh? Who?"

The vampire referee quickly turned around. But he was too late and Infector shoved his fangs into the vampire referees' neck. The vampire referee burst out with confusion as the fangs touched his neck.

"T-this is..... How dare this person....."

"Kukukuku. It's been a while, Tarosu.

"Huk! This voice is..... Infector!"

"Has it been a few hundred years? It is good to see you again. You took quite good care of me in the past."

"Infector! You dare set your foot on this land again....."

"I didn't want to come here."

Infector murmured as he inserted his fangs in deeper.

"But it's not bad. I got to taste your blood because I came here. Have you been sucking up to the Lord while I was gone? For a lowly vampire like you to become the referee..... Or has the Lord already grown old? Well, that's good. I'll also have to eat the Lord sometime. Just like I promised a long time ago."

“You dare to say the Lord’s name.....!”

The vampire referee Tarosu shook with fury. But that was just his emotion. Tarosu actually couldn’t move even one finger. Tarosu belatedly realized the situation he was in.

“This spell.....Kin Blood-sucking!”

“Kukukuku, do you understand now? But it’s too late.”

Infector smiled while giving off the smell of blood. Tarosu moaned as he blurred and changed to blood crystals that were absorbed by Infector. Infector withdrew and wiped at the blood flowing from his mouth. An intense light started emitting from the Summoning Port in the corner of the bedroom. Infector smiled at the light and muttered.

“Huhuhu, it seems like I don’t have to worry about going back.”

Infector then entered the light coming from the Summoning Port.

“Hyung-nims, move over there and lure the demons!”

When a crossroad appeared, Ark ran to one side with 300 soldiers and shouted. Jjak-tung quickly nodded and gave the order.

“Understood. Dong-chi, Bul-kkun, Tazza.....take 100 troops and lure the demons to the traps at D-15, 16 and 17. We will also take 100 people and lure the remaining monsters to C-6, 7, 8 and 9!”

“Okay, meet at the 59th floor when the situation is cleaned up!”

Therefore the rehabilitation members split to the left and right with the demons following. Fire immediately spouted as the demons entered the road that the rehabilitation members ran through. Once again, Wormer and the raccoons had created many traps.

.....Immediately after Infector disappeared, Alan had mobilized the demons and the Avengers to attack Ark's troops. Thus Ark instantly withdrew from the cliff. Despite having the terrain advantage, they wouldn't be able to face that many monsters with only 500. So they used the terrain and traps laid out on the 59th floor to escape the pursuing demons. Now Ark hid in a suitable place and entrusted the demons to the rehabilitation members. He had no time to be playing tag with the demons.

"Infector was definitely moved to Dark Earth!"

Ark muttered as he bit his lip. The reason Ark had cancelled the summoning was a desperate measure to save Racard from Infector. If they flew off together then nothing had changed. Whether it was the secret dungeon or Dark Earth, Racard would still end up being digested.

'But.....'

Ark once again had another idea. He had succeeded in his goal of sending Racard back to Dark Earth but Infector had also gone along. Then what if he tried to summon Racard again? I might be able to find a way to summon Racard from Infector. It was the reason Ark had the rehabilitation members lure the demons away. It was in order to get Racard away from Infector without the demons interfering! After a while, Ark's group arrived at an underground square surrounded by high cliffs on all sides.

"Okay. I will start the summoning. Everybody be prepared to attack.

"Summon Demon, Racard!"

Ark summoned Racard in the underground square. Then Infector appeared on one side near Ark.

"Che, this has become troublesome."

Infector frowned as he saw the 300 troops surrounding him. Then Ark raised his sword and used Advanced Intimidation to shout.

"Infector, vomit out Racard!"

“Kukukuku, intimidation? Do you think a trick like that will work on a vampire? It is impossible. I am a vampire who has lived for more than 1,000 years!”

Infector then shouted.

“Blood Arrows!”

Chwa chwa chwa chwa chwa chwa!

Dozens of arrows shot in all directions from the hem of his robes. The warriors hurriedly raised their shields as the arrows flew. Then Infector revealed huge black wings and flew into the sky.

“Hahaha! You fools, did you think you were the first ones who thought about surrounding me? I’ll drink all of your blood in the near future. Blood Arrows!”

Infector shot Blood Arrows while flying in the air. If he flew beyond the cliff then he would escape to where the demons were. But Ark just sneered and muttered.

“Bah, you still don’t know your situation. Summon release, Racard. Summon Demon, Racard!”

“Ugh! W-what? Dammit!”

Infector who was just about to fly beyond the cliff cursed as he disappeared. And he once again appeared in front of Ark. That’s right. This was a situation Infector couldn’t avoid because Racard still hadn’t been fully digested. As long as Racard was inside Infector, Ark could freely release and summon him again. Ark’s controlling power had already surpassed Infector’s so there was nothing Infector could do.

‘But as Racard’s absorption rate increases, Infector’s controlling power would become higher. And soon I won’t be able to freely summon him.’

“Archer units, chain shot attack!”

The archers at the rear of the troops took out some portable cannon. It was the cannons that the raccoon clans used. After the raccoons worked on reconstructing the 59th floor, they also supplied the troops. However, the cannons were originally the weapon of the raccoons. Archers who were used to ranged weapons such as bows wouldn't be able to exert the full power of the cannons. However, Ark had them carry the cannons because of the effect of the 'special' bullets.

-Special Bullet (Artillery)

A special bullet that the raccoon clan created after many years of research. Just like the name, it is a bullet produced for a special purpose. They are special bullets that give blunt damage to the enemy and 'stun' them, bullets which shocked an enemy, tied up an enemy, caused 'slowness,' made the enemy unable to fly, penetrate the enemy's defense, etc.

And it is possible to convert to such special bullets according to the circumstances.

Ark and Shambala attacked Infector like a storm from the left and right. Infector's health quickly drained thanks to the combined attacks of the warriors, priests, Ark and Shambala.

"Kuaaaack! T-these lowly fellows.....!"

But a level 500 boss wasn't an insignificant opponent. Despite the pouring attacks and magic, Infector managed to complete a spell.

".....Blood of the Great King. Confusion!"

A red flash occurred in Infector's eyes. It was the special skill of a high ranking Infector, 'Confusion!' Although the magic didn't do any damage, it was a really troublesome spell. Most warriors brandishing a shield made dim expressions and turned with a pleasant smile. Then the spat on the floor like they had rabies and attacked the priests.

"Damn, those fools! Get a hold of yourself!"

Ark yelled and kicked the warriors' backs.

While the warriors were recovering from being kicked, the priests used 'mental purification' magic and released the confusion. But the number of priests was lacking compared to the warriors and spells were hard to chant when they were being attacked. While the warriors were attacking the priests, Infector had started to chant his 'Confusion' spell again.

".....Blood of the Great King....."

"You're praying too much!"

At that moment, Ark took out a black meat from his bag and threw it.

-Hell Bomb

A special food made using Creative Cooking. It is created by combining hot peppers, vinegar, rotten meat, horseradish etc. An extremely bad smell which goes beyond human limits is drifting from this dish. If you pull it out in a public place then you will receive a wild beating.

<Hell Bomb has an effect of 5 metres>

It was Hell Bomb created using Creative Cooking! When hit by the Hell Bomb, Infector immediately shrieked.

"Kuaaak! W-what is this?" E-eyes...n-nose.....they're burning!"

The Hell Bomb released an extremely bad smell that made the vampire go crazy. The impact was the same as a gas grenade as Infector rolled along the ground while grabbing his nose. It was the same for the warriors. The soldiers who were 'confused' also screamed at the bad smell and rolled across the ground.

"Now. Priests, use your holy magic!"

".....Holy!"

The priests avoided the bad smell and unleashed their holy magic. Infector tried to run away many times but the archers shot chains at him and forced him to the ground. Meanwhile, the effect of Hell Bomb had disappeared. The warriors that escaped from the effect of Confusion surrounded Infector and attacked. When that situation repeated a few times, Infector became deeply bruised. There were no breaks in the attacks and Infector soon fell into a critical condition.

“Shambala!”

“Okay. Chain, chain, chain!”

Shambala ran towards Infector after hearing Ark’s words. At the same time, dozens of chains tied around Infector. ‘Chain’ was the exclusive skill of the God Killer that was only available after the enemy fell into a critical condition.

Ark stepped on the neck of the tied up Infector with his foot.

Act 9: High Pureness Vampire

“It’s over!”

Ark’s voice echoed through the area. Infector glared at Ark and growled.

“Y....you! An insignificant human like you.....”

“Take this, Dark Strike!”

Ark snorted and raised his sword. Then Infector shouted in a desperate voice.

“W-wait a minute! You don’t care what would happen to your pet if I die?”

“W-what?”

Ark's eyes glanced at him with surprise. Dark Strike narrowed missed and hit the ground. Infector laughed and murmured.

"You don't want to lose your pet."

"You bastard, what do you mean by that?"

"Hehehe, it is like I said. You are the owner of a pet so you should understand. I've already absorbed 80% of his blood. Racard has already become a part of me. If I die then he will obviously die. You should've already guessed since you tried to use Intimidation on me. Huhuhu, you wouldn't want to lose the loyal pet that still responded to its owner's commands while being absorbed do you?"

Ark's eyes shook after hearing Infector's words. After thinking for a moment, Ark pressed his foot harder against Infector's neck and said.

".....Vomit out Racard immediately!"

Infector immediately closed his mouth. And his eyeballs rolled before he giggled and said.

"Kukuku. Okay. No matter how good the food is, it is no use if I die. If you really want the bat back then I will return him. But I have some conditions. Release me. And move all the soldiers to the rear. I will release that fellow as soon as my safety is secured.

"Do you think I'm naive enough to believe something like that?"

"It is your choice whether to believe it or not."

Infector replied with a vile smile. Ark was completely at a loss from Infector's relaxed attitude. In fact, that was the part that caught in Ark's mind while he was fighting. He had been worried that Racard would be destroyed along with Racard. Of course, there was a chance that wouldn't happen. However, he couldn't risk Racard's life on a gamble. He also couldn't give into Infector's request.

'If I save Infector then he will spare Racard.'

But Ark specialized in dirty tricks. He wasn't naive enough to believe that Infector would do what he promised.

'The problem is I don't know whether that guy is telling the truth or not. Will Racard really die along with him? If I figure that how then I would know how to respond.....'

Ark was conflicted about what to do. Then he suddenly heard someone's voice in his head.

-Don't be fooled Foreigner!

"What, what the?"

Ark looked around with bewilderment after hearing the voice.

-I am the vampire referee appointed by the great Vampire Lord of Dark Earth.

"Vampire referee?"

Ark thought aloud, causing Infector to flinch and angrily shout.

"Vampire referee? Tarosu? T-that bastard! You're still conscious.....!"

"How do you know the vampire referee?"

Ark asked and kicked Infector a few times. There was a long sigh and the voice of the vampire referee was heard again.

-.....It's shameful to admit this but I was absorbed by Infector after he came to Dark Earth. I was able to apply a shield so that I wouldn't lose consciousness while I was being absorbed. And Infector is weakened so I can talk to you.

The vampire referee was eaten during the short time Infector was sent to Dark Earth? Ark looked at Infector with amazed eyes. And he realized why he thought Infector had changed after flying to Dark Earth. Before Infector had been sent away to Dark Earth, he had already absorbed 50% of Racard in 10 minutes. But those message windows never appeared again after he was sent to Dark Earth.

‘Infector said Racard is still alive in his stomach. Nevertheless, the absorption has stopped. There must be a reason why.’

Ark had thought about the reason while fighting. However, he figured out the real reason after hearing the vampire referee’s words. He had stopped absorbing Racard in order to absorb Tarosu.

‘If that is true then I’m lucky because of Tarosu.’

It was thanks to him that Racard’s absorption was stopped.

“By the way, why did you tell me not to be fooled?”

-After I entered Infector’s body, I became aware that Racard was also eaten. Infector used the Kin Blood-sucking skill which had been sealed by the Vampire Lord for a long time. Once Infector has swallowed a soul using Kin Blood-sucking, he cannot vomit it out again.

“W-what?”

Ark felt his heart drop at the Tarosu’s words. In the end, there was no way to stop Racard’s extinction? Tarosu had just reconfirmed the fact that Racard wouldn’t survive.

-My demise was inevitable from the moment I was eaten. Now that I know the relationship between you and Racard, I have no choice. Now, foreigner who as succeeded Hero Maban’s will! There is no time to hesitate. Strike down with your sword.

“Won’t you die as well?”

-There is a reason I’ve maintained the protective shield despite not being afraid of death. It isn’t because I wasn’t willing to lose my willpower after being absorbed by that guy. Instead of being killed by Master’s enemy, I would rather die with honour! Moreover, I want to help the person who has inherited Master’s will.

“The person who has inherited your Master’s will?”

-That’s right. I am Hero Maban’s summon.

Tututudung!

Tarosu really said unbelievable words in this absurd situation. Ark stared with a dumbfounded expression as Tarosu's explanation came out of nowhere

-.....A long time ago, I was just a low ranking vampire sucking on the blood of travellers. Then I was seized while attempting to eat one of the travellers. I thought it was all over then. But he didn't kill me. On the contrary, he actually made me one of his summons. He later became one of the 7 heroes and was called Hero Maban.

Ark recalled a previous event that he experienced in Dark Earth. The first time Ark had met Tarosu, he had spoken Hero Maban's name with a subtle longing. He didn't know why at the time but if Tarosu was Hero Maban's pet then it was understandable. He had spent hundreds of years longing for his master who disappeared.

"By the way, what did you mean by your Master's enemy?"

Ark wondered and the vampire referee recalled the past.

-The reason Hero Maban entered the land of the vampires was to meet with the Vampire Lord to request that he cut of relations with the Dark Lord.

According to Tarosu, the vampires had belonged to the forces of darkness in the early days of the Dark Century. And Hero Maban had gone alone to convince the Vampire Lord. The Vampire Lord admired Hero Maban's courage for visiting alone and met for a week to seriously discuss it. It was at this point that Infector appeared. Infector was the vampire referee at the time. He had tricked the Vampire Lord and had a secret deal with the Dark Lord. During the meetings to convince the Vampire Lord to withdraw from the forces of darkness, Infector secretly snuck into Hero Maban's room. However, Hero Maban already knew about the relationship between Infector and the Dark Lord. Thanks to Hero Maban making preparations beforehand, Infector was caught and trapped in a dungeon after incurring the Vampire Lord's rage.

-But Infector escaped from the prison not long after that. Up until that moment, the Lord hadn't known. The Dark Lord had trained Infector in the ancient art of Kin Blood-sucking. Infector used Kin Blood-sucking to steal the souls of countless vampires while escaping to the dark forces.

The Vampire Lord broke off all relations with the Dark Lord after that event. And while Hero Maban and the other heroes were fighting the Dark Lord, Tarosu had killed Infector. But he was a stubborn villain. He was once again restored with the power of the black obelisks. It was the tangled history between Hero Maban and the vampire clan! Ark had accidentally discovered one of the hidden secrets of New World. But that history was useless to Ark. The only thing that mattered to Ark was Racard who he had raised for 2 years.

"Is there really no way to save Racard?"

-No. That is the fearful part about Kin Blood-sucking. Once Racard was absorbed, he became a part of that guy. If he receives damage then we receive damage. Killing that body would be no different from killing Racard.

"Kukukuku, what did he say? Did he say there was a way?"

The sarcastic words fell from Infector's mouth at that moment.

"I guess I can't deceive you anymore. Racard and that referee have been perfectly integrated into my body. Those guys and I am the same vampire. Since we are linked, if I receive damage then they will also receive damage."

"This bastard.....!"

Ark was about to angrily kick Infector again. Then something rose in Ark's head.

'Wait, they have no choice but to receive the same damage as Infector?'

Infector was clamouring because he was fully aware there was no way to save Racard. However, his words actually gave him a hint about saving Racard.

‘If I consider Tarosu and Infector’s words then there might be a way to rescue Racard. I don’t know if it will succeed or fail but it is my best option. But the problem won’t go away even if I’m successful.’

Ark’s thoughts spun furiously in his head.

“Tarosu-nim, what kind of situation is Racard in now?”

-Racard is close to being fully absorbed by Infector. It will take approximately 1 more minute until he is fully absorbed by Infector. Even if I spread my shield to him, he will only survive for another 10 minutes. Infector will become many times stronger once we are fully absorbed. This is the only chance to kill him.

This was the problem that Ark was worried about. A considerable amount of time had passed since Racard was eaten and sent back to Dark Earth and now his absorption rate was at 90%. Ark had thought the method of saving Racard was to separate him from Infector’s body. It was impossible to save Racard’s stats when he had already been absorbed this much. In other words, if the level 350 Racard was 90% absorbed then it meant Racard’s stats would become equivalent to level 35.

‘Still, if there is a way then I have to save him.’

Even if he saved Racard, he could no longer be useful as a summon.

‘But.....’

“Tarosu-nim, please listen to my words from now on and tell me whether it is possible or not.”

Ark organized his thoughts before talking again. And he explained the idea he had a while ago. Tarosu considered before replying in an affirmative voice.

-It is possible. But.....

“That’s okay. I have a way to save Racard and referee-nim inside Infector’s body.”

-What? Is that true?

"Yes, but to be exact I can't save both of you.

-Both of us? That's right. I also considered it after hearing the question you asked me. Are you asking me to sacrifice myself for Racard?

"I'm really sorry. But I can truly only save one person. And if I have to pick there the choice is obvious."

Ark replied in a firm voice. Tarosu replied after a moment of silence.

-Hahahaha! You don't care about anyone aside from your pet?

"No, you don't have to go that far....."

-Great!

Tarusu shouted and interrupted Ark.

-That's it. I understand your will. And I've already lived for hundreds of years so death has no meaning to me. But that little fellow with tears in his eyes probably doesn't want to die. Why would I hesitate? Then Foreigner who received Hero Maban's will, I accept your offer!

He arranged the situation after everything was put in order.

"A cannon!"

When Ark reached out his hand, one of the archers handed him a cannon.

"Huck! T-these bastards.....what on earth.....n-no..... The way you devised won't work! Are you really going to destroy the pet you raised? T-those words! You'll fail....."

"Shut up!"

Infector guessed the situation after listening to Ark and Tarosu's conversation so he started struggling and screaming. However, Ark

already made up his mind and changed the special bullet with no hesitation. The cannon was loaded with the special bullets containing 'holy water!' Ark smiled and shoved the cannon into Infector's mouth.

"Goodbye you bastard!"

Tu tu tu tung, tu tu tu tung, tu tu tu tung!

When the trigger was pulled, the cannon vibrated and dozens of holy water bullets were shot. Since the cannon was shoved into Infector's mouth, the dozens of fire holy water bullets entered his stomach. After a while.....

Ku ku ku kung! Ku ku ku lung! Pepeng!

Infector swelled like a balloon. The swollen Infector then exploded and scattered blood all over the place.

| |
|------------------------|
| -Your level has risen. |
|------------------------|

| |
|------------------------|
| -Your level has risen. |
|------------------------|

| |
|----------------------------|
| -Your level has risen..... |
|----------------------------|

He was relatively easy to handle but Infector was still a level 500 boss. After Infector's stomach burst and he blew up like a balloon, the attack group instantly gained 7 levels. As a bonus, he discovered the blood covered necklace lying on the ground.

| |
|--------------------------------|
| -Infector's Blood Gem (Unique) |
|--------------------------------|

| |
|---------------------|
| Item Type: Necklace |
|---------------------|

| |
|-------------------|
| Durability: 53/60 |
|-------------------|

| |
|---|
| Weight: 30 User restriction: Level 450 and more |
|---|

| |
|---|
| This necklace contains Infector's ability. A long time ago, Infector betrayed the Vampire Lord in order to obtain the power 'Kin Blood-sucking.' And part of his power was trapped into the necklace to |
|---|

strengthen Kin Blood-sucking.

<Option: Controlling power +200, Intelligence +30>

<Special Option (Kin Blood-sucking): Then the wearer of the necklace kills someone of the same race (Human-Human, Elf-Elf, etc.) a part of their ability will be absorbed. When this ability is absorbed, you can randomly absorb 1~3% of Strength, Agility, Stamina, Wisdom, Intelligence or Luck. But the absorbed ability is only applied for 1 hour.

Mana consumption: 1,000

Cool down time: 1 hour>

A unique necklace! Ark's eyes brightened as he picked up the necklace and read the information window. However, Infector's loot wasn't as good as expected. While the special option Kin Blood-sucking was quite threatening, it was ultimately an item that didn't have a lot of merit. If he used the skill and killed the enemy then he would be able to absorb 1~3% of the abilities. However, these stats were only applied for 1 hour. And the cool down time was 1 hour. That meant Kin Blood-sucking was a skill that could be repeatedly used.

'Well, it will be good against boss monsters with absurdly high levels and stats but.....'

Like its name, Kin Blood-sucking could only be used on those of the same race. In the end, Ark could only use it on humans and most users had an average level of 300~350. Even if he used Kin Blood-sucking, he would only be able to raise it around 3~1 levels. It didn't feel like it was worth consuming 1,000 mana just for those kind of stats.

'Yet the Intelligence +30 is better than Adelaine's Necklace. If I decide to sell it later than the +200 controlling power will make it popular among summoners.'

Ark judged after looking at the necklace. In fact, Ark wasn't concerned about the necklace right now.

‘Racard? What is happening with him?’

Ark searched through the fragments of Infector scattered everywhere. Then something started wriggling underneath a piece of skin from the stomach. At first something seemed to rise in the blood. Then the scattered blood started moving and joined together into one large lump. And it changed into the form of a person?

“Racard!”

Ark shouted as he confirmed the form of the lump. That’s right. The blood was clotting together to form Racard.

“That is definitely Racard. As I expected!”

Ark shouted with glee. His method to separate Racard from Infector worked! It was actually Infector who told Ark the method to save Racard. If Infector was damaged then Racard would have no choice but to receive the damage as well! The moment he heard those words, Ark had recalled Racard’s duel with Karakul. At that time, Ark had used crosses and garlic to attack from the outside. Therefore Racard was able to defeat Karakul and evolve despite not fighting properly. This was because Racard wasn’t affected by light, garlic or crosses.

It was because of Racard’s existence. He wasn’t originally a vampire but a bat who had learnt the power of a vampire. Therefore he had the power of a vampire but he didn’t gain its weaknesses. Well, he couldn’t fly around in the middle of the day without being harmed but that was another story. It was to the extent that Racard could wash his face and brush his teeth with holy water.

.....That’s right. Holy water!

It was why Ark’s had shot holy water into Infector’s body. If the holy water bullets exploded in his stomach then Infector would receive enormous damage. However, it was just simple water to Racard. It was the same even when Racard gained the same properties as Infector. So Ark’s liquid damage had no effect on Racard. However, there was one problem with that method.

‘The problem is that his stats have already been absorbed by Infector!’

That’s right. If he forcibly separated Racard then there would be no way to regain those stats. So Ark had negotiated with Tarosu before he made Infector die from the explosion. Tarosu was originally a vampire. If the holy water bullets were fired then Tarosu would die along with Infector. But what if Tarosu fused with Racard? Ark had already seen Racard absorb Karakul’s blood in Dark Earth. Kin Blood-sucking was a skill which allowed the vampire to absorb the abilities of the same species. While Racard was being absorbed using Kin Blood-sucking, Tarosu had also been absorbed. Since both Racard and Tarosu’s blood was being absorbed, there was a possibility of their blood fusing together. Thanks to fusing with Racard’s blood, Tarosu was able to survive the influence of the holy water.

‘Infector absorbed quite a bit of the referee’s stats but he is still an elite level monster. Even with some of Tarosu’s abilities absorbed, Racard can recover his stolen stats!’

This was the method that Ark devised to restore the stats. Tarosu willingly accepted the offer and fused with Racard’s blood.

‘Now I have to check Racard’s stats.’

Ark quickly checked Racard’s information window after he was restored. He craftily laughed when the information window floated in front of him.

-Racard has successfully absorbed the soul of the vampire referee Tarosu and has evolved.

Racard has absorbed the blood of the vampire referee. While Kin Blood-sucking is forbidden, another vampire can absorb the status and abilities depending on the rules of kinship.

Racard who was absorbed along with Tarosu has gained the abilities of the vampire referee. Since Tarosu and Infector are top ranking vampires, his body has been reconstructed using their blood and he has become a

high pureness vampire. Racard who has become a high pureness vampire has been given the name 'Curio' by the great power that oversees the Netherworld.

"E-evolution?"

Ark looked at the information window with stunned eyes. His shortcut to restore Racard's stats became linked to evolution. When he thought about it, it was to be expected. The vampire referee was a top level vampire who was the aide of the Vampire Lord so it was natural Racard's standing would ascend when the blood was absorbed. Racard had succeeded in his evolution and changed to Curio. His face turned white like someone who had never seen the sun since he was born and his eyes were red. Curio was engulfed in a red coloured light and a new information window appeared close to Ark.

Curio

A vampire who has evolved into a high pureness vampire after the vampire referee willingly gave Curio his blood.

He has inherited the power of a top level vampire and awakened more of a vampire's abilities. However, a high pureness vampire has a fatal weakness to light.

<He cannot turn himself into a vampire in the daytime. When receiving direct sunlight, he will receive 30 damage per second and his stats will decrease by 50%. However, dungeons are an exception. In addition, his resistance to the dark attribute will increase by 100% while his resistance to the light attribute will decrease by 100%>

| | | | |
|-----------------|--------------|------------------|-----------|
| Race | Demonic | Alignment | Dark |
| Ranking | Middle Class | | |
| Health | 2,820 (+150) | Loyalty | 450 (+20) |
| Strength | 173 (+40) | Agility | 155 (+60) |

| | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------|----------|
| Stamina | 399 (+40) | Wisdom | 88 (+30) |
| Intelligence | 255 (+80) | Luck | 63 (+20) |
| <p>* The attack power of Lancel's sword has increased by 12 and the durability has increased by 90.</p> <p>* The skill slots of Blood-sucking has increased to 3.</p> <p>* The 'Confusion' effect has been added to the Blood-sucking skill.</p> <p>* You have learnt the 'Blood Storm' skill.</p> | | | |
| <p>-Confusion <Blood-sucking secondary effect> (Beginner, Species Characteristics): Curio's special skill.</p> <p>When using the Blood-sucking skill on a weak enemy, there is a 50% chance of a 'Confusion' effect being applied to the enemy.</p> <p>Thanks to Confusion, Curio can control the monsters for 30 minutes.</p> | | | |
| <p>-Blood Storm (Beginner, Species Characteristics): A strong destruction power is present in the blood of a vampire.</p> <p>Blood Storm scatters the blood of a vampire around like a storm and will deal strong damage to enemies within the area. All enemies within the area will receive 50~70 with each hit. The amount inflicted on the enemy is proportional to the amount of blood Curio has.</p> <p>However, the vampire's stats will fall by 50% until he manages to recover the blood lost. In addition, it can only be used in the darkness and can't be overlapped with Blood Lane.</p> <p><All enemies within a 50 metre area will be damaged></p> | | | |

"Huhuhuhu....."

Ark checked Curio's information window. Then Curio suddenly burst out laughing. And he rocked back and forth while laughing.

"Hahaha, I am now a top level vampire of pure blood! I....."

While Curio was speaking with an elated voice.

“Ark-nim!”

One of the soldiers can running from the rear and shouted with panting.

“It is important! The last line of defense on the 59th floor has just been pierced!”

“What? What about the rehabilitation hyung-nims’ troops?”

“That.....they’ve been wiped out!”

“Dammit!”

Ark and the other soldiers ran off. Curio was left along until he transformed into a bat and followed.

“Eh? Hey, look.....I just evolved. Hey, Master.....let’s go together!”

TO BE CONTINUED